TRANSFORMATIONS AND CRISIS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, 1

TCM

Giving Voice to Silence

Material and Immaterial Evidence of the Female World and Childhood from the Coroplastic Perspective

Edited by
Marianna Castiglione and Ida Oggiano

CNR – ISTITUTO DI SCIENZE DEL PATRIMONIO CULTURALE

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Proceedings of the Webinar (September 21-22, 2022)

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CNR – ISTITUTO DI SCIENZE DEL PATRIMONIO CULTURALE
ROMA 2024

edizioni
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This research work is a product of the PRIN2017 Project: “Peoples of the Middle Sea. Innovation and Integration in Ancient Mediterranean (1600-500 BC)” - Prot. 2017EYZ727, funded by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research.

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© CNR Edizioni, 2024
Piazzale Aldo Moro, 7 - 00185 Roma
www.edizioni.cnr.it
ISBN (ed. stampa / print ed.) 978 88 8080 688 2
ISBN (ed. elettronica / electronic ed.) 978 88 8080 689 9
DOI https://doi.org/10.19282/tcm.01.2024

TCM is a double-blind peer-reviewed series

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PREFACE

Lorenzo Nigro*

The volume "Giving Voice to Silence. Material and Immaterial Evidence of the Female World and Childhood from the Coroplastic Perspective" stems from the PRIN2017 Project "Peoples of the Middle Sea" devoted to the investigation ancient Mediterranean cultures during the time span 1200-333 BC. The Project aims at a full scientific appraisal of the mechanisms of INNOVATION & INTEGRATION between cultures. The leading heuristic concept of the Project is that innovation fosters integration and vice-versa, and, as far as the topic of this volume is concerned, the re-appraisal the role of women in cultural encounters in ancient Mediterranean.

The volume is the publication of a workshop organized on Sept. 21st-22nd 2022 within the framework of the "Heritage Science on Air" initiative of the ISPC of the CNR, under the aegis of Costanza Miliani, who I wish to thank for the extraordinary support given to our PRIN Project by the Institute itself and the Unit Leader Ida Oggiano.

This volume opens an important scholarly dialogue about a historically overlooked subject: the representation of women and children in coroplastic art and what these figurines reveal about the societies that produced them. Across the ancient Mediterranean, these figurines conveyed social, religious, and cultural significance. This book focuses on how the materiality of clay figurines, through their intricate shapes and symbolic meanings, embodies the immaterial aspects of gender, motherhood, childhood, and social roles, shedding light on the silent yet powerful presence of women and children in antiquity.

The volume presents a crucial examination of the often overlooked yet deeply significant role that women and children played in ancient Mediterranean societies. Through the lens of coroplastic studies – an analysis of terracotta figurines – it seeks to reveal the ways in which these figurines reflect the material and immaterial aspects of daily life, religious beliefs, and social practices surrounding women and children. The figurines studied in this volume span from the Bronze Age to the Hellenistic period and cover a wide geographical area, from Cyprus to the Levant, Italy, Sardinia, and beyond.

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The terracotta figurines, while often small in scale, serve as monumental witnesses to the cultures that created them. Their significance lies not only in their aesthetic value but also in the socio-cultural meanings embedded within them. By examining these figurines, the contributions in this volume challenge traditional narratives and offer new insights into the roles and representations of women and children in the ancient Mediterranean world.

Through a combination of archaeological, anthropological, and art historical approaches, the scholars, all women, contributing to this volume analyze terracotta figurines as lenses through which we can better understand ancient perceptions of the female body, motherhood, childhood, and their associated roles in Mediterranean societies. In doing so, this book offers a groundbreaking exploration into how gender and age had materialized in these delicate yet telling artifacts, opening a window into everyday life, belief systems, and ritual practices.

We can now imagine letting the beads of a necklace slide through our fingers, as we examine the key points of each paper collected by M. Castiglione and I. Oggiano.

Barbara Bolognani opens the volume with her chapter *Images of Women and Children in Pre-Hellenistic Terracotta Figurines from the Northern Levant*. Her work provides an in-depth analysis of figurines depicting women and children, noting that while elite male figures are more common in other forms of Levantine art, terracotta figurines give prominence to ordinary women and their roles in society. Bolognani's analysis offers a nuanced view of gender roles in Syria and highlights the importance of terracottas in understanding social dynamics.

Marianna Castiglione, in *Framing Women and Children in the Ancient Levant: Insights from Terracotta Figurines*, expands on Bolognani's themes by examining how figurines help frame our understanding of the roles of women and children and their reflection in coroplastic work attested to in Phoenicia. Castiglione emphasizes the social and cultural importance of these artifacts, exploring the way they depict women in various stages of life, from youth to motherhood.

The wide presence of coroplastic works in the Phoenician world accounts for the need of a basic and vivid art medium for communicating cultural and religious traditions and is thus a special field for studying cultural interactions which Phoenicians used to generate.

Stephanie Lynn Budin shifts the focus to Cyprus with her stimulating paper on *Women, Maternity, and Status in Bronze Age Cyprus*. Budin explores the complex relationship between motherhood and social status in early Cyprus, challenging the often-simplistic view that women's roles were solely defined by their reproductive capacities. Through the analysis of kourotrophic figurines Budin demonstrates that Cypriot women's identities were multifaceted and that their status in society was influenced by a range of factors beyond maternity.

Stéphanie Huysecom-Haxhi, in her contribution *Images of Motherhood in the Votive Deposit of Kirrha: Identification and Interpretation*, turns our attention to the votive deposit of Kirrha in Greece, where figurines of women dominate. Huysecom-Haxhi focuses on the lesser-known types of figurines, such as those representing pregnant women or women with symbolic objects like figs or bread. She interprets these figurines as symbols of maternity and rites of passage, offering a new perspective on the societal expectations surrounding motherhood in ancient Greece.

Giulia Pedrucci examines the role of terracotta figurines in funerary contexts in her paper *Statuettes Representing Woman/en with Infant/s in Funerary Contexts in Ancient Italy*. Pedrucci explores the significance of these figurines, often depicting women holding infants, within tombs from central and southern Italy. She argues that these figurines reflect deep societal beliefs surrounding motherhood and the loss of children. While they are relatively rare in central Italy, they become more prevalent in Magna Graecia and Sicily, pointing to regional variations in funerary practices. Pedrucci's work opens up discussions on the emotional and social responses to infant mortality in ancient Italian societies and provides a comparative analysis with similar figurines found in other Mediterranean regions.

Angela Bellia focuses on the relationship between music, dance, and childhood in her paper *Clay Figurines Representing Musicians and Dancers in the Female World and Childhood: Towards an Archaeology of Musical and Dance Performance*. Bellia highlights how terracotta figurines depicting female musicians and dancers reflect the importance of these activities in both ritual and daily life. She also explores how these figurines contribute to our understanding of the socialization of young girls and their roles in religious and cultural performances. By placing these figurines within the broader context of ancient music and dance archaeology, Bellia's work provides valuable insights into the performative aspects of female and childhood identity in ancient Mediterranean cultures.

Antonella Pautasso, in her paper Parthenoi *from Greek Sicily: The Visual Imagery between Coroplastic Art and Lyric in the Archaic Period*, delves into the representation of young maidens (*parthenoi*) in Archaic Greek Sicily. Pautasso connects the visual representations of *parthenoi* in coroplastic art with descriptions found in Archaic Greek lyric poetry. Through this interdisciplinary approach, she argues that the figurines of *parthenoi* were not merely decorative objects but served as important symbols in religious rituals and social customs. Pautasso's study highlights the deep connection between visual and literary representations of gender, focusing on how young maidens were portrayed at a critical stage in their lives, often in association with impending changes such as marriage.

Marina Albertocchi's paper «*And Received Him in Her Fragrant Breast, with Her Immortal Hands…». Mothers and Motherhood in the Figurines from Ancient Gela, Sicily* explores the representation of mothers in Classical Greek figurines from Gela in Sicily. Albertocchi examines the *kourotrophos* figures – figurines depicting women with children – that were found in the Demetriac sanctuary of Bitalemi. She focuses on the limited number of such figurines compared to other offerings, such as those depicting donors with animals. By contextualizing these figurines within the sanctuary's emphasis on fertility, Albertocchi argues that the *kourotrophoi* may represent more than simple fertility symbols, instead embodying a broader range of meanings tied to motherhood and social status in ancient Sicily.

Rosana Pla Orquín discusses the Phoenician and Punic terracotta figurines from Sardinia in her paper *Made in Clay: Phoenician and Punic Female Imagery from Sardinia*. Pla Orquín examines figurines from various sacred and funerary contexts, analyzing the iconography of women depicted in these figurines. Her analysis includes figures such as tambourine players and women

with children, emphasizing the social and cultural interactions between the Phoenicians and the indigenous Nuragic populations. Through her detailed study of these figurines, Pla Orquín provides a compelling argument for how these objects reflect the integration of foreign and local artistic traditions, as well as the role of women in these intercultural exchanges. Her analysis of the iconography reveals the transmission of religious and social practices across the Mediterranean, emphasizing the role of women in these exchanges which was one of the main goals of the PRIN2017 "Peoples of the Middle Sea" Project.

Mireia López-Bertran, in her chapter *Iberian Coroplastic Artworks (3rd-2nd Centuries BCE): Types and Corporealities*, focuses on Iberian figurines from southeastern Iberia during the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE. López-Bertran explores the shift from life-size human representations to smaller, more portable figurines made of metal and clay. She analyzes how these figurines, particularly those depicting women and children, reflect changes in social status, age, and corporeal representation. López-Bertran also examines the influence of Punic and Mediterranean traditions on Iberian coroplastic art, highlighting the technological and iconographic innovations that occurred during this period.

Conclusion

The contributions in "Giving Voice to Silence. Material and Immaterial Evidence of the Female World and Childhood from the Coroplastic Perspective" offer groundbreaking insights into the roles of women and children in ancient Mediterranean societies. By focusing on terracotta figurines – objects often overlooked in traditional archaeological narratives – this volume provides a unique perspective on the material and immaterial aspects of these groups' lives. The figurines studied here not only serve as aesthetic objects but also as vital cultural artifacts that reveal the social, religious, and emotional dimensions of the ancient world.

These papers push the boundaries of coroplastic studies and encourage future research into how material culture reflects the complexities of gender, childhood, and cultural interaction. By bringing together these diverse studies, *Giving Voice to Silence* enriches our understanding of the ancient Mediterranean and invites scholars to continue exploring the untold stories of women and children through their material traces.

As the P.I. of the "Peoples of the Middle Sea" Project, I am very grateful to the organizers Marianna Castiglione and Ida Oggiano, as well as to all the participants of the workshop for such rich and well-centered results.

INTRODUCTION

Marianna Castiglione, Ida Oggiano*

This volume brings together ten contributions presented at the webinar we organized at the Institute of Heritage Science, held on September 21-22, 2022, titled "Voice to the Silence. Materiality and Immateriality of the Female World and Childhood from the Coroplastic Perspective"[1].

The international meeting took place within the framework of the PRIN2017 Project "Peoples of the Middle Sea. Innovation and Integration in Ancient Mediterranean (1600-500 BC)", aiming to give voice to women and children through archaeological documentation spanning from the Bronze Age to the Hellenistic period. Despite their ubiquitous and fundamental presence in antiquity, women and children have often been overlooked in "official history" and the socio-political reconstructions of their respective communities. Over the course of this two-day webinar, the focus was on exploring their roles, which were far from marginal, as evidenced by works of art and craftsmanship, as well as the imagery depicted on these objects.

The event was part of the *CNR ISPC on Air* Webinars series, launched by the Institute of Heritage Science in May 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic, when remote platforms became essential to facilitate research dissemination and scientific debate[2]. This virtual format enabled the participation of international speakers and expanded the audience beyond Europe.

Thirteen female speakers, all specialists in coroplastic studies, participated in the webinar. They presented examples of terracotta figurines from the chosen chronological range, focusing on various aspects related to the female world and childhood, offering new data and insights for trans-Mediterranean and intercultural comparisons. Artifacts from various contexts were analyzed, with an initial emphasis on the central Mediterranean – encompassing Greece, Magna Graecia, Sicily, and other regions of ancient Italy – before expanding to the East (Cyprus, the Levant, Babylonia)

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[1] For the details on the webinar, programme and abstracts, see: https://www.ispc.cnr.it/it_it/2022/09/06/cnr-ispc-on-air-voice-to-the-silence/.

[2] On the format of *CNR ISPC on Air* Webinars series see: https://www.ispc.cnr.it/it_it/eventienews/webinar-cnr-ispc-on-air/.

and the West (Sardinia and the Iberian Peninsula). At times, coroplastic materials were compared with written sources and other archaeological evidence, underscoring aspects such as technological innovations and iconographic developments, as well as intangible dimensions related to social and cultural interaction and integration[3].

The ten contributions included in this volume are organized geographically, moving from the eastern to the western Mediterranean, to highlight both significant continuities and notable differences in the iconography and social functions of terracotta figurines across cultures and periods.

In the Levant, a diachronic analysis from the Early Bronze Age to the Hellenistic period underscores shifts in the representations of women and children, offering insights into their public and private roles within ancient communities and reflecting the changing importance of gendered roles over time. Female figurines emphasize themes of fertility and motherhood but also reflect concerns surrounding childbirth and child survival, as well as the increasing complexity of women's social identities. Similar evidence from Bronze Age Cyprus suggests that reproductive and nurturing capacities, along with domestic responsibilities, constituted only part of women's roles. Conversely figurines of children depicted in adult attire or engaged in various postures suggest social meanings related to their status and age transitions (B. Bolognani, M. Castiglione and S.L. Budin).

In the Greek world, terracotta figurines similarly highlight themes of fertility, motherhood and successful transitional stages in women's social lives, as seen in votive deposits from Kirrha and in female figurines from Archaic and Classical Sicily. These statuettes also illustrate the interplay between visual culture, lyric poetry and ritual traditions. Depictions of musicians and dancers, including both women and children, are associated with ritual performances and reflect moments of play, education and socialization, particularly within sacred spaces (S. Huysecom-Haxhi, A. Pautasso, M. Albertocchi and A. Bellia).

Moving to funerary contexts in central and southern Italy, terracotta figurines depicting women with infants reflect anxieties surrounding childbirth and child survival (G. Pedrucci), concerns also found in statuettes from the Levant. In Sardinia, figurines of women found in sacred and funerary contexts indicate the integration of local and foreign elements, illustrating the social and cultural interactions between Phoenicians and local people. Similarly, figurines of women and children from eastern Iberia reflect processes of cultural exchange, with gestures and corporeality serving to construct and define aspects of age and status (R. Pla Orquín and M. López-Bertran).

[3] For a summary of the webinar's content, see M. Castiglione – I. Oggiano, *Voice to the Silence. Materiality and Immateriality of the Female World and Childhood from the Coroplastic Perspective. International Webinar – Heritage Science on Air. Istituto di Scienze del Patrimonio Culturale (ISPC), Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (IT), 21-22 settembre 2022*, in Les Carnets de l'ACoSt [Online] 23, 2023, pp. 1-6. https://journals.openedition.org/acost/3708; DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/acost.3708.

Thus, this volume offers a valuable resource and methodological tool for the identification and semantic analysis of terracotta figurines within their original contexts, as well as for their interpretation in contemporary scholarship. By examining a variety of contexts, the volume facilitates the exploration of a single theme that interconnects the feminine sphere and childhood – areas that are often treated separately. This approach allows for the identification of connections and divergences between cultures and regions that, while geographically distant, share a close relationship within the broader Mediterranean framework.

Terracotta figurines, through their postures and distinctive features, convey important information about the individuals they represent and the actions they depict, often reflecting significant stages in the social lives of women and children. The key milestones in their lives include:

- adolescence and the pre-marriage period, marked by concerns related to bodily changes and fertility,
- transitions through life stages, varying forms of play and education, and the gradual acquisition of rules governing adulthood,
- life as a γυνή within the *oikos* and certain public spaces of the *polis*,
- pregnancy and the associated risks of carrying this phase to term,
- anxieties surrounding breastfeeding, childbirth and child-rearing, with a focus on the well-being of the child,
- the strong bond between mother and child throughout life,
- maternal love that transcends death.

Other significant themes include the prominent role of women as future wives and mothers, with some exceptions for their participation in rituals, particularly as musicians and dancers. Additionally, there is a relative scarcity of figurines depicting children as autonomous individuals in pre-Hellenistic contexts, with notable exceptions from the southern Levant and Sardinia. Terracotta figurines are closely tied to key life milestones for women and children, highlighting their integration within ancient societies, where moments of apparent happiness may conceal underlying social or personal challenges.

Future research should continue to explore the agency of female and child terracotta figurines, as well as the agency of the statuettes themselves and those who used them. The motivations behind selecting particular figurines to represent specific actions, emotions, or life events also warrant further study. Additionally, the identification of purchasers, users, dedicants and subjects requires deeper investigation, as does the role of men in female-centered rituals. Methodologically, precise terminology and careful interpretation are crucial, as is the consideration of terracotta figurines within their original contexts, production processes and in relation to other artworks and sources from the same period and region. Ultimately, the integration of material culture with intangible sources – such as ancient written texts, soundscapes, scentscapes and physical movements – enriches our understanding of ancient Mediterranean societies and their cultural dynamics, offering a more nuanced and comprehensive perspective.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Costanza Miliani, Director of the Institute of Heritage Science, and Lorenzo Nigro, Principal Investigator and Coordinator of the PRIN2017 Project, for their enthusiastic support in organizing the event. We also thank Alfonsina Pagano for her technical coordination of the webinar.

Our thanks go to all the participants in the webinar, as well as to those who agreed to publish their contributions in this volume.

We are also indebted to Giuseppe Garbati and Tatiana Pedrazzi, the editors in chief, and to the advisory board, which accepted this publication as the first volume of the series. We express our gratitude to the editorial board for their assistance in reviewing the texts, and to Laura Attisani for her professional graphic project and layout.

Finally, we extend our sincere thanks to friends and colleagues who collaborated with and supported us throughout this project: Rebecca Miller Ammerman, Erin Walcek Averett, Ágnes Bencze, Corinne Bonnet, Maurizio Cannatà, Barbara Carè, Nicola Chiarenza, Véronique Dasen, Monica de Cesare, Adi Erlich, Stephanie M. Langin-Hooper, Adriano Orsingher, Maurizio Paoletti, Elisa Chiara Portale, Alexander Pruß, Victoria Sabetai, Gina Salapata, Fabrizio Sudano and Jaimee Uhlenbrock.

IMAGES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN PRE-HELLENISTIC TERRACOTTA FIGURINES FROM THE NORTHERN LEVANT

Barbara Bolognani*

Abstract: The visual representation of women in northern Levantine societies – and to a much lesser extent that of children – is still poorly investigated. The few available studies to date have always focused on the iconography of female figures of royal or religious importance. Furthermore, these studies largely rely on a set of iconographic sources deriving from elitist material culture (statues, reliefs, furniture, seals, ivories, etc.). In this visual record, although historically valuable, women are somehow misrepresented. Female figures are not only frequently portrayed in a propagandistic manner, but they are also critically rare compared to male characters. In contrast, in minor art, ordinary women and children appear in significant numbers. In the case of clay figurines specifically, in some periods female figures tend to outnumber male ones. These artefacts are the most reliable visual source enabling us to understand women's roles. This paper, therefore, explores the representation of women and children in Syro-Anatolian coroplastic from the end of the Early Bronze Age to the Persian period. Detailed descriptions of each production's physical features, gestures, and public and private roles are presented. As such, a special focus is given to continuity, change, and micro-regional variations through time.

Keywords: Terracotta Figurines; Northern Levant; Women; Children; Gender.

1. Introduction

Given the current state of field research in the northern Levant, it remains challenging to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the representation of women and children in local terracottas over time. However, this paper aims to serve as a foundational point for future extensive analyses. New studies that will look at clay figurines not only as a product of the so-called folk religion, but also as indicators of emerging social trends, essentially as visual expressions of collective generational sentiments.

Before delving into the analysis, it is necessary to establish the time-space context. While the paper deals for the greatest part with figurines retrieved in current Syria, several sites considered in the research are today located in southern-eastern Turkey (Table 1). Hence, the terms "Syro-Anatolian" and "northern Levantine region" are used interchangeably. Data presented in this paper follows a chronological order, starting from the Early Bronze Age IV (henceforth, EBA IV) and concluding with the Persian period. Prior the EBA period, figurines are exceedingly rare and are

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almost exclusively zoomorphic[1]. Female figurines, in particular, though documented during the Neolithic period, appear to vanish from the local coroplastic tradition throughout the entire 4th millennium BCE[2].

Nevertheless, despite having defined the chronological and geographic parameters, this approach presents some limitations. Indeed, the coroplastic production of the northern Levant as a part of the local material culture largely mirrors socio-political shifts. Consequently, not all historical periods are equally represented in terms of available data. For instance, while occupational phases for almost all periods are attested in some of the mentioned sites, clay figurines are not always associated with them. Moreover, the latter are not systematically published when retrieved. The quantitative data is also influenced by contemporary factors, such as scholarly perspectives or the number of excavated sites per period. However, most significantly, fieldwork in Syria has been halted for over a decade due to the civil war.

This paper, therefore, has the following structure. Firstly, the ratio between the representation of female and male figurines is observed for each period. Then, a specific focus is placed on the visual features of female subjects. In this regard, one can anticipate that in this part of the Levant, female bodies are never represented as pregnant or engaged in childbirth; but the nursing act is instead attested[3]. As for children, their portrayal reveals substantial differences compared to other Levantine regions and, for certain periods, their attestation seems linked to their involvement in the cultic sphere.

2. Early Bronze Age IV (ca. 2400-2000 BCE)

For the EBA IV, only one micro-regional study has been produced by Ferhan Sakal, who analysed more than 2000 figurines from the Middle Euphrates valley[4]. Within this region, one sees a real explosion of terracotta manufacture[5] with four micro-regional centres (Fig. 1.a-d) (ME F1-4)[6]. Alongside the Middle Euphrates, distinct productions can also be observed in the Amuq[7] and Khabur[8] valleys. Other isolated productions are instead associated with a few major political centres, such as Hama[9], Ebla[10], Mari and Terqa[11]. Neverthless, the Middle Euphrates remains the focal point for all other neighbouring productions.

[1] Moorey 2005, p. 147.
[2] Sakal 2020, p. 175; Pruss 2013, p. 604; 2020, p. 185.
[3] According to Budin (2011, p. 149), only a dozen *kourotrophoi* can be counted between the Bronze and Iron Age for the Levant. See also Nakhai 2014, pp. 169-174.
[4] Sakal 2013; 2020. Sakal's study was anticipated by two fundamental research by Liebowitz 1988 and Petty 2006.
[5] Moorey 2005, p. 148.
[6] Sakal 2013, pp. 13-23, 45-64.
[7] Pruss 2010, pp. 35-45, pls. 1-3.
[8] Pruss 2020.
[9] Badre 1980, pp. 29, 45-66.
[10] Peyronel 2008; 2013; 2014.
[11] Parrot 1956, pl. LXVIII, nn. 283, 399; Weygand 2007; 2020, fig. 3.

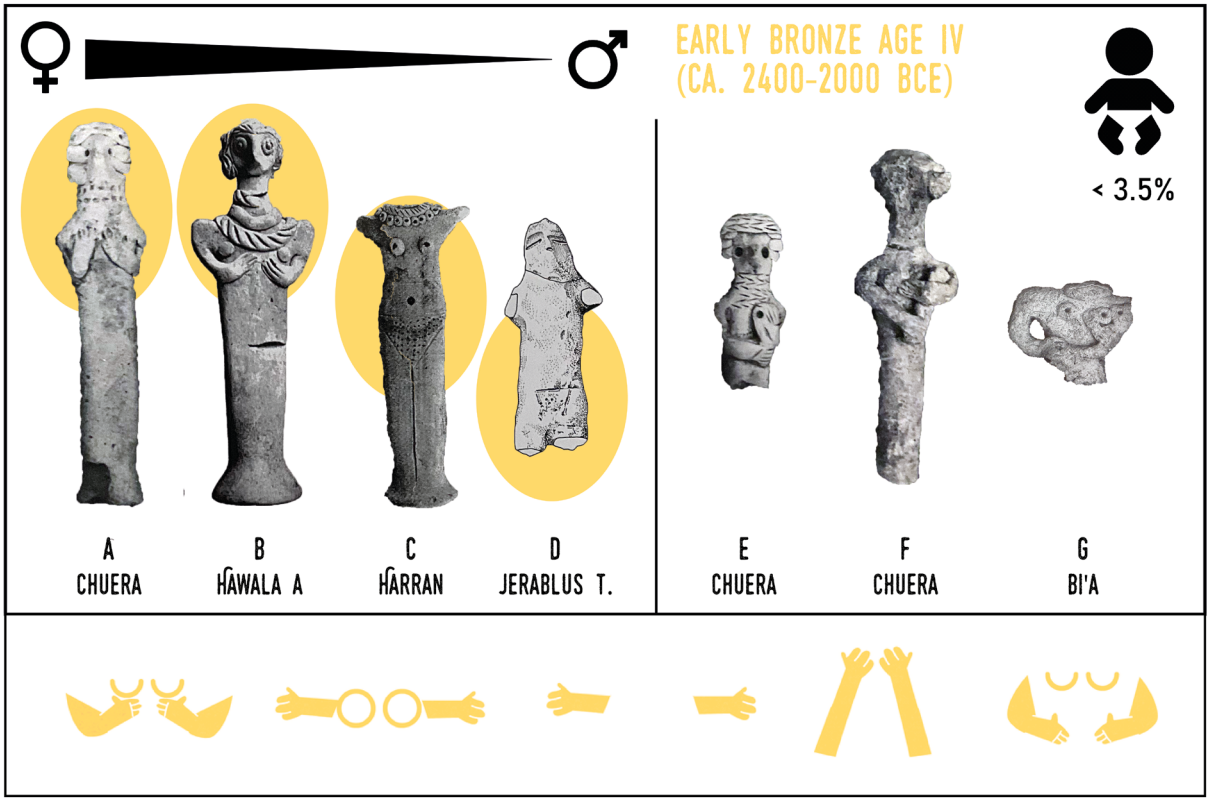

Fig. 1. EBA female figurines with marked focal point and child-bearers, below most attested gestures (images modified after: a, e-f. Badre 1980, pls. XXXII.9, XXXIV.32-35; b-d. Sakal 2013, pls. 2, 13, 14; e. Strommenger – Miglus 2010, pl. 33.2).

During the EBA, the ratio between male and female subjects varied significantly depending on the production. For instance, in the Middle Euphrates Type 2 production (ME F-2), the most popular one, genders are fairly balanced[12]. However, it is generally observed that female subjects tend to outnumber male ones (ME F-1, 3)[13], especially in productions with limited regional diffusion. In this period, figurines are free-standing and pillar-shaped, with decorations clustered around the head, and then the visual focus is upper-centred (Fig. 1). The distinction between the two genders is mostly based on gestures and occasional anatomical features, such as the presence of the breasts or beards[14]. Moreover, decorations are particularly rich regardless of gender[15].

Regarding female figurines specifically, the majority are dressed since the pubic area is rarely represented. There are, however, some micro-productions showing occasional naked figurines in

[12] Sakal 2013, pp. 50-55, 89-94, fig. IV.11-12. Genders are also balanced for the ME-F-4 production: Sakal 2013, pp. 63-64. See also Petty 2006, pp. 64-65.
[13] Sakal 2013, pp. 89, 147-148.
[14] Liebowitz 1988, pp. 4-5; Moorey 2005, p. 148; Petty 2006, pp. 25, 29-30; Pruss 2010, pp. 44-45; Sakal 2013, pp. 50-52, 56-57, 63, 83-87, 92-96, 100, 102-111, fig. IV.13, 16, pls. 2-8; 2020, pp. 175-177.
[15] According to Sakal (2013, pp. 152-159), the varied headdresses of part of the Middle Euphrates production were probably related to different costumes traditions to the east and west of the river.

the Middle Euphrates (ME F3.1-3)[16] and the Khabur Valley[17]. These naked figurines emerge only towards the end of this period[18], foreshadowing the most popular theme of the MBA. Gestures are much varied, ranging from the hands covering the breasts[19] to the very popular breast cupping gesture[20], or the arms bent at the elbows with hands pressing on the abdomen[21], until the introduction of outward protruded stump arms[22] (Fig. 1, below). This last gesture is again an anticipation of a typical MBA tradition.

In this period, a low occurrence of children can be observed. They appear only in the Middle Euphrates pillar figurines (ME-F1-3)[23], constituting no more than 3.6% of the *corpora* (Fig. 1.e-g). However, compared to the following periods, this percentage is rather remarkable. During the EBA IV, children are always associated with an adult figure, most frequently female[24], usually dressed or partially naked. They are portrayed as newborns or very young infants, positioned either at the side, while breastfeeding, or in front of the chest[25].

3. Middle Bronze Age I-II (ca. 2000-1600 BCE)

Another very complex and somewhat partially documented production is that of the Middle Bronze Age I-II (MBA I-II). For this period, the most detailed regional study has been conducted by Nicolò Marchetti for Ebla and the Idlib plateau (Fig. 2.a-d). The scholar was also able to distinguish seven other micro-regional productions[26], which, however, exhibit rather common features, including the coroplastic tradition of Mari (Fig. 2.e).

During this period, there is still a predominance of female subjects over male ones[27]. The decline of male subjects – usually portrayed as riders or seated figures holding an object on their shoulder[28] – is particularly remarkable compared to the previous period. At Ebla, for instance, male subjects account for only 14% of the *corpus* for all MBA periods[29]. Marchetti has also estimated that in other Syrian sites, the average ratio between female and male subjects is 2.7 to 1[30], meaning that

[16] Petty 2006, p. 30; Sakal 2020, pp. 177-178.
[17] Pruss 2020, pp. 186-187.
[18] The ME-F3 type was in use between the EBA IVB-MBA I (ca. 2300-1900 BCE): Sakal 2013, pp. 27, 44, pl. III.3.
[19] Moorey 2005, p. 148; Sakal 2013, pp. 56-57, 62, 148.
[20] Sakal 2013, p. 62.
[21] Sakal 2013, pp. 56-57, 91-92, fig. IV.14-15.
[22] Sakal 2013, p. 185.
[23] Specifically, 4 out of 110 (3.6%) of type ME-F1, 4 out of 139 (2.8%) of type ME-F2, and 2 out of 75 of type ME-F3 (2.7%). In Sakal's study (2013, pp. 62-63), out of 11 published figurines, more than half comes from Tell Bi'a.
[24] Moorey 2005, p. 148.
[25] Sakal 2013, pp. 62, 93-94, pl. V.17.
[26] Marchetti 2000; 2001.
[27] Badre 1980, pp. 97-98; Marchetti 2001, p. 61; Pruss 2002, p. 538; Moorey 2005, p. 153; Felluca 2014, p. 248.
[28] Moorey 2005, p. 153; Petty 2006, pp. 33-34.
[29] Marchetti 2001, pp. 138-142, pl. 2.5-7.
[30] See also the detailed percentages for Hama (9% for the MB I), the Amuq Plain (3.5:1 for the MB II), Alalakh (3:1 for the MB II), and Tell Deinit (3.4:1 for all MB periods). Cfr. Marchetti 2001, pp. 198-199, 232-233, 240, 319; Rossi 2022, p. 29, diagramma 4.

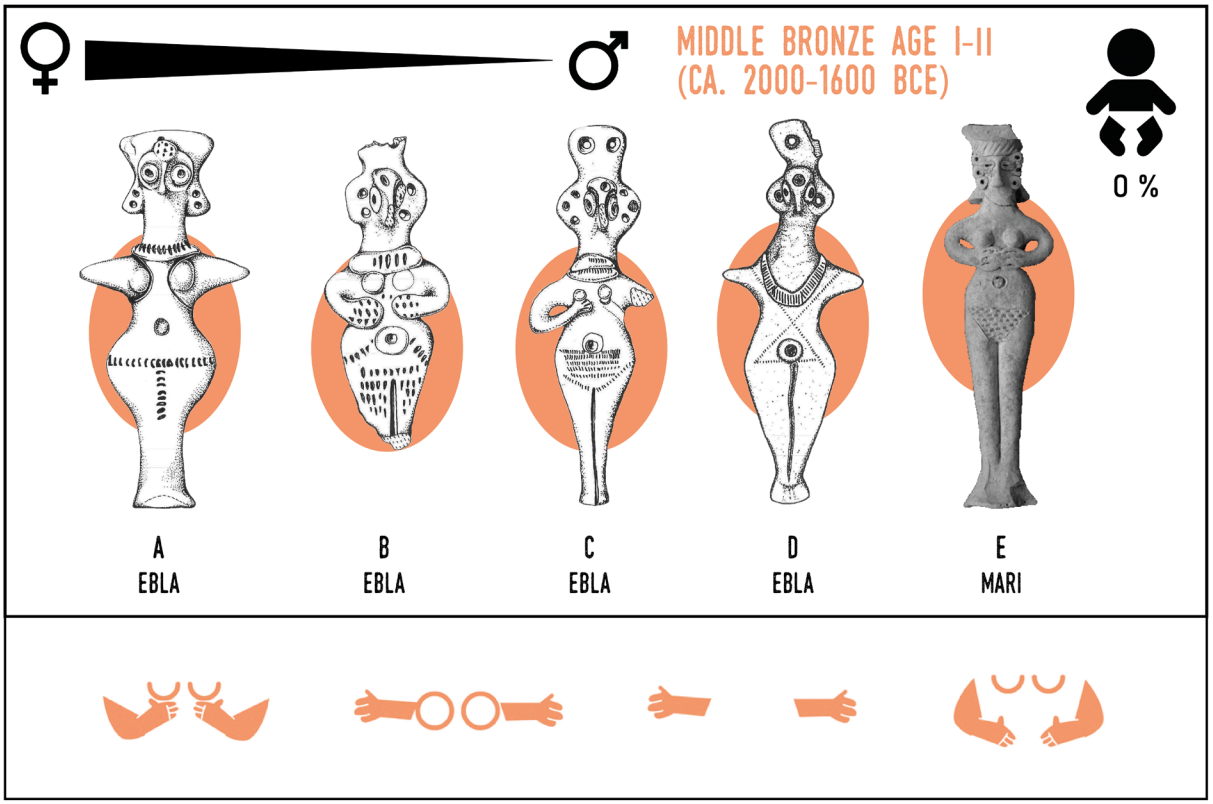

Fig. 2. MBA female figurines with marked focal point, below most attested gestures (images modified after: a-d. Marchetti 2001, figs. 4, 14, 17, 18; e. Weygand 2020, fig. 2.e).

female figurines outnumber male ones for more than twice. Another interesting data is the total absence of children, which is quite unusual considering that the MBA was probably one of the most prolific periods for coroplastic production.

In terms of female subjects, during the MBA, a dramatic shift towards an exclusive naked representation of women is observable[31]. Indeed, female figures are depicted with uncovered breasts, visible nipples, and the pubic area[32]. The only recurring decorations are two bands crossing the chest, derived from the EBA IV tradition[33]. The rendering of the pubis becomes progressively more naturalistic starting since the MBA II and coinciding with a production peak[34]. This indicates that there was heightened emphasis on this part of the body, with significant implications for the meaning and use of these figurines. Indeed, to favour the shaping of *genitalia*, there is a gradual

[31] Moorey 2005, pp. 152-153. Weygand (2020, p. 196, fig. 3.d-e) has estimated that only the 7% of figurines in Mari are naked, while in Terqa the percentage is incredibly high, i.e. 50%. However, the scholar does not disclose if this data refers specifically to the MBA.
[32] From Mari and Terqa see Parrot 1956, pl. LXVIII, nn. 50, 133, 372, 433, 440, 649, 1070; 1959, fig. 52; Weygand 2007, figs. 6-7; 2020, fig. 2.e-h.
[33] Marchetti 2001, p. 313; 2007, p. 258; Petty 2006, pp. 33-34.
[34] Marchetti 2001, pp. 18, 49-50, 57-58; Felluca 2014, p. 259.

abandonment of the pillar bases[35]. This technical change prevents figurines from being freestanding. At the level of gestures, it is observable a continuation of both the breast cupping gesture and the outward protruded stump arms (Fig. 2, below)[36].

4. Late Bronze Age I-III (ca. 1600-1200 BCE)

Moving on to the Late Bronze Age (LBA), it can be asserted that this is, by far, the most poorly studied period for North Levantine coroplastic. Mass productions seem to disappear, and the sites where terracottas can be found are rather scattered[37]. To date, after a general assessment by Leila Badre[38], only the Amuq Plain production has been thoroughly studied by Alexander Pruss[39], while the only site with reliable contextual evidence is probably Tell Munbaqa[40].

During the LBA, with the introduction of the moulding technique stimulated by Babylonian production, female subjects still predominate, while male ones tend to disappear[41]. The dominant type is certainly the so-called "Astarte Plaques" (Fig. 3.a-c), named as such because they have been associated with the cult of this goddess[42]. Although most of these figurines were retrieved in domestic contexts[43], the link with the cult of Astarte/Ishtar could be explained by dual evidence. On the one hand, the very first figurines of this type appear in Mari and Terqa in the transitional phase between the MBA and the LBA[44]. In Mari, the Astarte Plaques are sometimes not only naked, but also hold a tambourine (Fig. 3.c)[45], a musical instrument played by Ishtar dancers in the Mari texts[46]. On the other hand, some of these Astarte Plaques are applied to miniaturized models of houses with upper room or towers in Emar[47]. These models are at times decorated with other symbols connected to this goddess, such as birds (doves). In Muller's opinion, these models were likely used as altars for domestic rituals[48].

The Astarte Plaques depict standing nude women mostly performing three gestures: holding the breasts; with one hand cupping the breast and the other at the side; both arms along the sides

[35] Marchetti 2001, p. 314.
[36] Marchetti – Nigro 1997, p. 22, fig. 11; 2000, pp. 269-271, figs. 9-10; Marchetti 2001, pp. 314-315.
[37] Badre (1980, p. 118) already in the 1980s observed the rarity of figurines from sites in inner Syria.
[38] Badre 1980.
[39] Pruss 2010; 2022, pp. 334-338.
[40] Eichler *et al.* 1984; Machule *et al.* 1986; 1987; 1990; Machule – Czichon – Werner 1989; Czichon – Werner 1998.
[41] Dornemann 1989, pp. 70-71; Pruss 2002, p. 539; Moorey 2003, pp. 34-35; 2005, p. 154; Petty 2006, pp. 36, 64-65.
[42] Pruss 2002, p. 541; 2022, pp. 334-338; Petty 2006, p. 36.
[43] Petty 2006, pp. 58-60; Pruss 2022, p. 334.
[44] Parrot 1959, pls. XIX, XXIX, nn. 755, 761, 892, 990, 1021, 1022, 1044; Weygand 2020, fig. 2.a, d; Moorey 2005, p. 153.
[45] Moorey 2005, p. 153; Weygand 2020, p. 196.
[46] Otto 2016, p. 128.
[47] Margueron 1976, pp. 205-207, 220-223, figs. 6-7, 12; pls. II.1, LIII.1-3; Muller 2002, pp. 117-118; 2014, p. 126; 2022.
[48] Muller 1995, p. 377; 2014, p. 131; 2022.

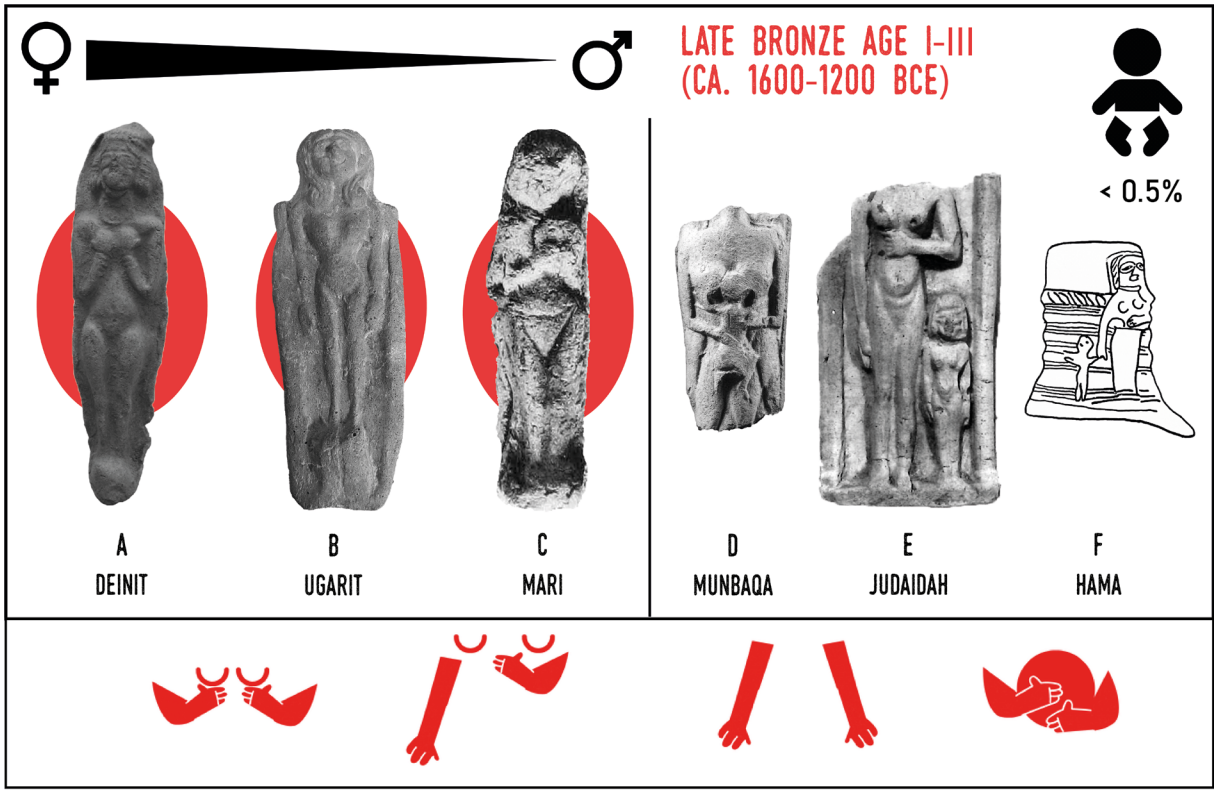

Fig. 3. LBA female figurines with marked focal point and rare representations of children, below most attested gestures (images modified after: a. Rossi 2022, pl. 102; c. Parrot 1959, pl. 18; d. Czichon – Werner 1998, n. 4182; e. Pruss 2010, pl. 21, n.176; f. Badre 1980, pl. VI.125; b. photo by the Author, Louvre Museum AO 18524).

(Fig. 3, below)[49]. The hairstyle is simple and always divided into two hair locks, sometimes clearly resembling an Hathoric wig[50]. At an imagery level, the focus is rather diffused since jewels are reduced to a minimum, allowing the glaze to fully emphasize the shape of the body. Unlike the Southern Levant, where these ladies are systematically portrayed with a slightly rounded womb[51], suggesting early pregnancy, the northern specimens are very rarely depicted this way. Generally speaking, they do not seem to be associated with maternity, as if the original Southern Levantine motif derived from the Egyptian imaginary[52] was not fully developed here. Conversely, what seems to matter is the enhancement of their juvenile traits (reduced size, small, flourishing breasts, long limbs, and narrow hips) with their probable sexual allure[53]. These are, in fact, the main attributes of the Mesopotamian Inanna-Ishtar[54], from which they are directly inspired.

[49] Petty 2006, p. 20; Pruss 2022, pp. 334-338.
[50] Moorey 2005, p. 154; Petty 2006, p. 36; Yon 2016, p. 457.
[51] Nakhai 2014, pp. 170-173, figs. 2-4.
[52] For a selection of contributions on the Egyptian influence on Southern Levantine divine iconographies see Keel – Uehlinger 1992; 1998; Pinch 1993; Teissier 1996; Moorey 2003, pp. 35-40; Ben-Tor 2016.
[53] Petty 2006, pp. 38-39. Also, the breast cupping gesture is frequently associated to eroticism: Pruss 2022, p. 341.
[54] Budin 2015, pp. 314-315, 319.

Children are consequently scarcely associated with the Syrian Astarte Plaques, and the few available images are unique from an iconographic point of view. For instance, at Munbaqa, one can find a single figurine portraying a naked female holding a child, who seems seated on a low stand while grasping the mother's breast (Fig. 3.d)[55]. To this example, one might tentatively include two reliefs from Hama[56] and Tell Judaidah[57] found out of contexts. Both iconographies show a standing child next to a female figure (Fig. 3.e-f).

5. Iron Age I-III (ca. 1200-539 BCE)

Another poorly documented period is the Iron Age (IA), for which the Author has recently proposed a regional study[58]. This was anticipated by Alexander Pruss' analysis of the Amuq Plain *corpus*[59], the publication of the Tell Rifaat materials by Nea Nováková[60] and those of Tell Afis by Paola D'Amore[61]. In this period, one can still observe a contraction of the coroplastic production, except for the Middle Euphrates area where there is a revival of the EBA tradition. Despite the limited evidence, six micro-regional productions with slightly different chronologies can be distinguished (Fig. 4.a-f)[62]. In all these productions, there is again a dramatic change compared to the preceding period. Apart from zoomorphic specimens, especially of the equid type, which is the most attested one[63], male and female subjects are equally represented, usually with men as riders and women as standing pillar figurines[64]. Conceptually speaking, however, considering that riders are associated with equid figurines, the male counterpart seems visually dominant[65].

Women are portrayed dressed and embellished with rich decorations in the upper part of the body, especially around the head (Fig. 4.c)[66]. The breasts rarely appear, and they are not really used to represent nakedness, but rather gender. Indeed, during the IA, there is attempt to emphasize the sexual aspects of the female body[67]. On the contrary, gender markers are often hidden as suggested by the most diffused gesture of covering both breasts instead of cupping them[68]. In two earlier

[55] Machule *et al.* 1990, fig. 122; Czichon – Werner 1998, pl. 165, n. 4182.
[56] This fragment was found in an MBA level (Stratum H): Ingholt 1940, p. 60, pl. XIX, n. 6; Badre 1980, pp. 66, 190, pl. VI, n. 125.
[57] This fragment was in a mid-Iron Age level (Phase Oc-Q); according to Pruss (2010, pp. 158-159, 415, n. 176) the child could be interpreted as a donator.
[58] Bolognani 2017; 2020a; 2020b; Bolognani – Maini 2022.
[59] Pruss 2010.
[60] Nováková 1971.
[61] D'Amore 1992; 1998; 2015.
[62] Bolognani 2017, parts 3-4.
[63] Bolognani 2017, pp. 46, 244, 260-264, 279-282, 288, 291, 294, 301-302, 312, fig. 15; 2020b, p. 44, fig. 1; Bolognani – Maini 2022, pp. 31-35.
[64] Pruss 2010, pp. 200-202, nn. 556-570.
[65] Bolognani 2020b, p. 44.
[66] Bolognani 2017, pp. 139-145; 147-156; 2020a, pp. 220-223, fig. 2; 2020b, pp. 50-52, fig. 5.
[67] Bolognani 2017, p. 164, fig. 83. Only one female figurine from the Amuq Plain seems to stress gender features: cfr. Pruss 2010, n. 291.
[68] Bolognani 2017, pp. 164-166, table 34; 2020a, pp. 223, 228-229, fig. 3; 2020b, p. 44.

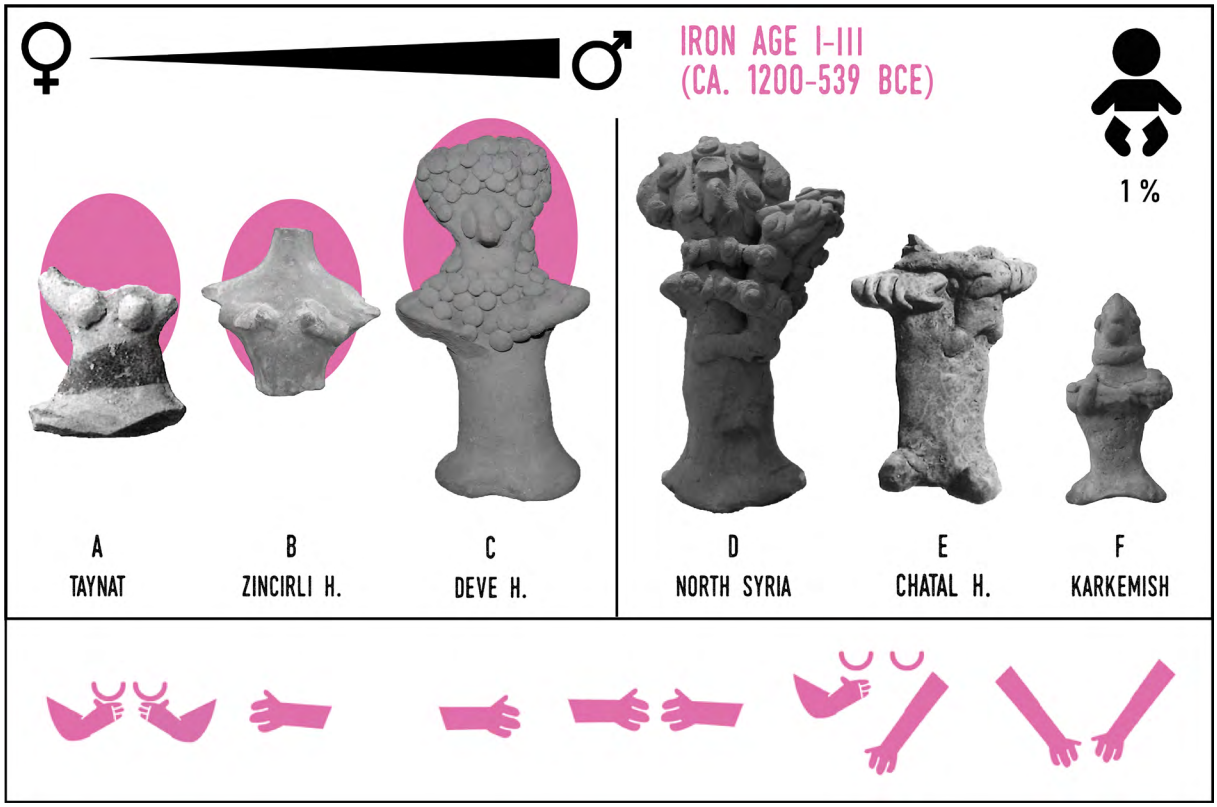

Fig. 4. IA female figurines with marked focal point and child-bearers, below most attested gestures. (a, e. images modified after Pruss 2010, pls. 24, 34, nn. 205, 290; photos by the Author: b. Pergamon Museum S1797; c. Fitzwilliam Museum ANE.80.1913; d. Bible Lands Museum BLM594; f. British Museum 116182).

productions of the Amuq Plain, one can also observe a faint continuation of the PSI gesture (Fig. 4.a), which was probably influenced by the Mycenaean tradition[69].

For what concerns the representation of children, these are absent for the greatest part of the IA, only appearing towards the Iron IIb-III. Additionally, in the late IA, children are included in the coroplastic production of only two micro-regions: the Middle Euphrates[70] (ca. 1%) and the Amuq Plain (Fig. 4.d-f)[71]. The association of children with pillar figurines, even in the Amuq Plain, is a tradition likely exported from the Middle Euphrates. It is in fact in this area that children are linked to the so-called Syrian Pillar Figurines[72]. Although numerically scarce, for the first time children are dressed as adults, and sometimes they even mimic their gestures, notably the most common one (Fig. 4.f). This suggests, in the Author's opinion, an involvement of children in

[69] Pruss 2010, pp. 200-202, nn. 204-205; 2022, p. 338; Bolognani 2017, pp. 254, 266.
[70] To date, no more than 12 specimens are known for this micro-region: Woolley 1939, pl. XVIII.a1; Woolley – Barnett 1952, pl. 70.b-c; Bolognani 2017, nn. 72-73, 733, 735, 738, 815, 829, 871; 2020a, fig. 3, pp. 221-222, 228.
[71] Only one figurine is known from Chatal Höyük: Pruss 2010, n. 290.
[72] Bolognani 2017, pp. 139-140, 146, 164; 2020b, p. 44.

public performances, as also testified by the occasional presence of anthropomorphic clay rattles[73]. This involvement seems to extend to all ages, with representations of both newborns and standing children.

6. Persian Period (ca. 539-330 BCE)

While the Neo-Babylonian period remains obscure so far, several contributions have been instead published for the Persian period production. Although none of them offer a regional approach. The first studies that attempted to classify terracottas were written by Paul Jorgen Riis for female figurines[74] and by Josette Elayi and Roger Moorey for male ones[75]. These studies have been updated in recent years with the publication of stratified figurines from Ebla[76], Tell Afis[77], Tell Deinit[78], Tell Mastuma[79], Jebel Khalid[80], and those from the Amuq Plain[81]. What we certainly know is that during this period, the core manufacturing area was Northwestern Syria[82], with a production peak to be identified in the region of Aleppo, as testified by the published materials.

The Persian period production is characterized by the apparent revival of the Astarte Plaques and the appearance of the so-called Persian Riders (Fig. 5), with a slight prevalence of the latter[83]. Although the two groups do not always appear in the same sites[84], male and female figurines are sometimes merged in single terracottas (Fig. 5.e)[85]. Thus, while these two groups are at times separate on a contextual level[86], in reality, there was a certain degree of interaction between genders.

Regarding female imagery specifically, some novelties in representing women can be detected. Namely, alongside the classic dressed and naked standing versions, one can also encounter semi-naked figurines[87], and, above all, occasional female riders (Fig. 5.a-d)[88]. The attestation of these riders is particularly important since these figurines have often been interpreted as representations of Astarte

[73] Bolognani 2017, n. 791.
[74] Riis 1948-1949.
[75] Elayi 1991; Moorey 2000.
[76] Micale 2013; 2014; 2018.
[77] D'Amore 2018.
[78] Rossi 2006; 2007; 2022.
[79] Nishiyama – Yoshizawa 1997; Tsumoto 2009; Nishiyama 2009.
[80] Jackson 2006; 2019.
[81] Pruss 2010, pp. 132-162; 2022, pp. 341-344, 357-368, figs. 14.5-10, 22-30.
[82] Elayi 1991, p. 182; Mazzoni 1991-1992, p. 60, fig. 4; Pruss 2000, pp. 52-54, note 5, figs. 1, 4; Lyonett 2005, p. 3; Nishiyama – Yoshizawa 1997, p. 76.
[83] At Tell Deinit 38% of figurines are females and 53% males, while at Jebel Khalid one can count 8 Astarte Plaques for 50 Persian Riders: Jackson 2006, pp. 78-104; 2019, p. 388; Rossi 2022, pp. 110, 258-259, note 52, diagrams 29, 46.
[84] Pruss 2000, p. 53.
[85] Nunn 2000, pls. 14.28, 17.34; Jackson 2019, fig. 27.11; Pruss 2010, nn. 429, 430, 435.
[86] Jackson 2006, p. 88; Micale 2021, p. 435.
[87] Riis 1948-1949, pl. XVII, nn. 1-4, 7; Nishiyama – Yoshizawa 1997, fig. 5.17; Nunn 2000, pl. 10.6-11; Rossi 2007, fig. 7; 2021, figs. 137-148; Nishiyama 2009, fig. 8.32.9-10; Pruss 2010, nn. 179-189; 2022, pp. 358-360, fig. 14.22-23; Micale 2014, figs. 6-7; 2021, fig. 6.d.
[88] Du Mesnil du Buisson 1932, fig. 9; Nunn 2000, pp. 44-46, type 9; Rossi 2007, fig. 9.e-f; 2022, figs. 188-193; Tsumoto 2009, figs. 8.23.1-2, 8.24.1; Pruss 2010, nn. 181, 442-454.

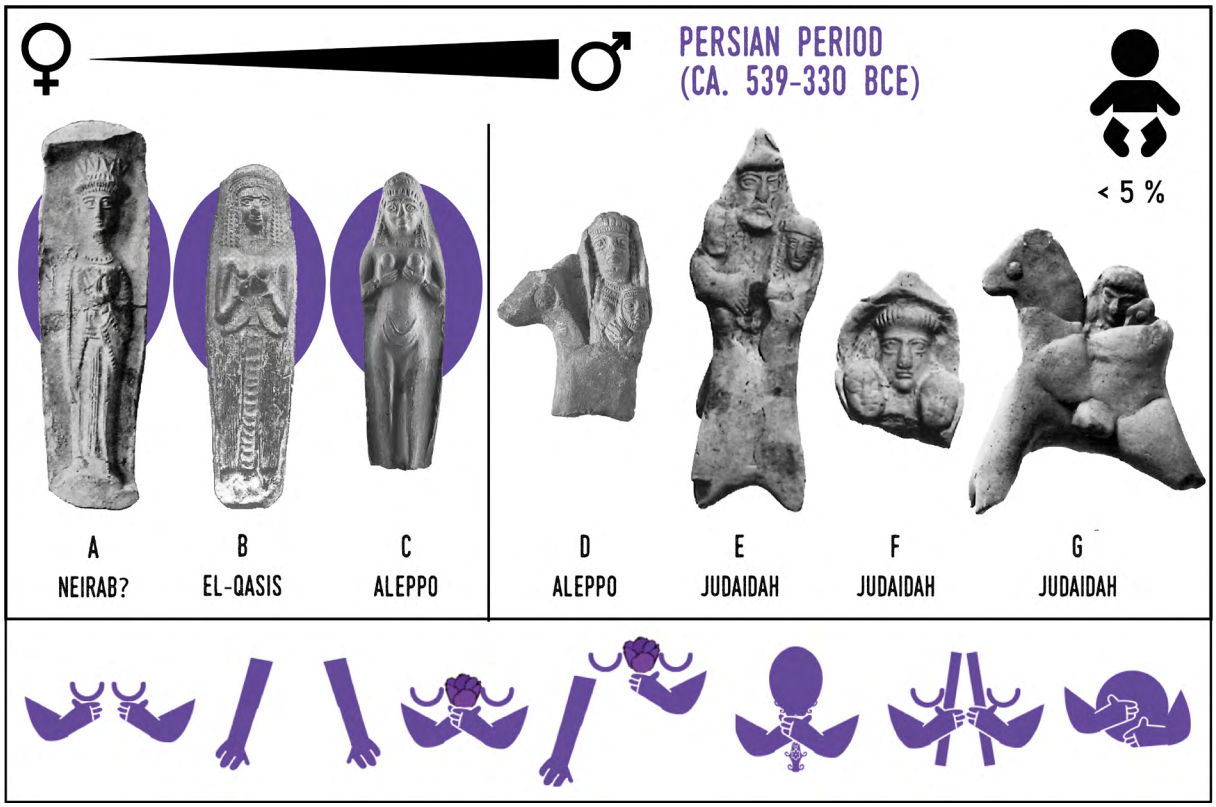

Fig. 5. Persian period female figurines with marked focal point and child-bearers, below most attested gestures (images modified after: a-b. Riis 1948-1949, pl. XVIII.2, 7; e-g. Pruss 2010, pls. 56, 58, 59, nn. 429, 432, 448; c-d. photos by the Author, Louvre Museum AO 29631, AO 29624).

or Atargatis[89]. However, their representation as riders, in the Author's opinion, contradicts this theory. Instead, these figurines, as already pointed out by Moorey[90], seem to have represented some female figures at different stages of their life or as status symbols, as suggested by their gestures and hairstyles[91]. Indeed, with the long-lasting tradition of the breast cupping gesture usually confined to naked or semi-naked figurines, one can also observe figures holding a blue lotus[92], a mirror[93], or a musical instrument (a tambourine or a double flute)[94]. Naked figurines with a prominent belly and marked pubis[95], which were not popular in the LBA, are now instead attested. According to

[89] Riis 1948-1949, pp. 81-84; Rossi 2006, pp. 582-583; 2007, p. 63.
[90] Moorey 2000, p. 481; 2002, pp. 207-209, 216; 2003, p. 45.
[91] A similar interpretation can be put forward also for the Persian Riders. At Tell Mastuma, for instance, two specimens were without moustache: Tsumoto 2009, p. 462. Differences in the rendering of the moustache and beard were observed at Jebel Khalid too: Jackson 2019, pp. 391-392.
[92] Nishiyama – Yoshizawa 1997, figs. 5.18-21, 6.30-31; Nunn 2000 pls. 11.12-15, 12.19; Jackson 2006, nn. 101-107; Pruss 2010, nn. 190-198; Micale 2013, figs. 4-5; Rossi 2022, pp. 260-261, figs. 160-172.
[93] Pruss 2010, nn. 201-203; 2022, fig. 14.10; Rossi 2022, figs. 176, 177, 188.
[94] Nunn 2000, pp. 41-42, type 4; Rossi 2022, figs. 58-69.
[95] Nunn 2000, pl. 9.1-4; Pruss 2010, nn. 154-171; D'Amore 2018, p. 182; Rossi 2022, pp. 150-151, 154-156, 181, 184, figs. 112, 117-118, 149. However, according to Pruss (2022, p. 341) none of them is pregnant.

contextual analysis, the latter appear towards the end of the period[96], once again marking a change in the visual representation of the female body. Another aspect emphasizing their likely human nature is their costumes, particularly their dentate tiara encountered in western Persian art as a symbol of high-status women[97].

Children in the Persian period continue to be rarely attested[98] and are represented in very peculiar ways. First of all, while *kourotrophoi* are incredibly popular in the Southern Levant, these are extremely rare in the north. Instead, children are associated with male and, above all, female riders (Fig. 5.d-g)[99]. Sometimes, their facial features are oddly rendered adopting the same moulds of the Persian Riders or the Astarte Plaques. By utilizing this expedient, perhaps in response to their irregular presence, infants with beards are produced[100], resulting in an iconographic distortion (Fig. 5.d). However, thanks to this expedient, it is the first time that the gender of children is revealed.

7. Conclusions

Although the compared *corpora* differ in size and level of study, and any precise statistical analysis cannot currently be put forward, a few trends are quite clear from the presented data.

Concerning the representation of the female body, this undergoes radical changes. It remains broadly covered in the EBA and for much of the IA and Persian periods. In all these periods, when women are dressed, the maternal aspect is recurrent. On the contrary, when their bodies are naked – as in the MBA and LBA - they often act as erotic references. In this context, the role of women as mothers takes a back seat, if not almost disappearing completely. To borrow Stephanie Budin's words, one can perfectly apply the following paradigm to female northern Levantine terracottas of all times: «The Nude Goddess is not maternal, the maternal goddess is not nude»[101]. It should also be noted that the introduction of clothes in the figurines seems to be linked with another phenomenon: the massive appearance of male subjects. This, in the author's opinion, is also related to the gradual increase in violence in Levantine societies starting from the LBA[102]. The representation of the female body would have been more controlled in militarized societies, like those of the IA and Persian periods.

[96] Micale 2013, pp. 696-697, 699; 2021, p. 434. *Contra* Riis 1948-1949, pp. 70-71; Pruss 2022, p. 357.
[97] Moorey 2002, pp. 207-210, figs. 1-3; 2005, p. 224; Micale 2013, p. 699; D'Amore 2018, p. 183; Rossi 2022, p. 261.
[98] In the Amuq Plain, on a total of 208 terracottas dating from the Persian period, 11 also portray children (ca. 5%): Pruss 2010, pp. 292-295. In the site of Tell Deinit, only 1 figurine out of 451 represents a female rider with a child: Rossi 2022, pp. 231-233.
[99] See a detailed list with references in Pruss 2010, pp. 292-296, nn. 435-438, 442-445, 448,450 and Nunn 2000, pp. 44-45, pls. 14.27-28, 15.29-32. See also the latest discoveries in Jackson 2006, nn. 121-122; 2019, fig. 27.11; Rossi 2022, p. 264, fig. 193.
[100] Cfr. Louvre Museum AO 29624.
[101] Budin 2015, p. 319.
[102] Baten – Benati – Soltysiak 2023.

Some enduring fashions trends in costumes are also observable. For example, figurines with musical instruments are associated with both clothed and naked subjects, but more frequently with the latter. In other words, nakedness was certainly an intrinsic aspect of ritual acts[103]. This has already been attested in other visual sources, such as in the Old Syrian glyptic where nakedness appears in the framework of fertility rituals for the cult of Ishtar[104]. Subsequently, naked figurines playing musical instruments become recurrent subjects at the end of both the LBA and Persian periods. Those with mirrors, on the other hand, appear to be associated with dressed figurines in the Persian period. Geographically speaking, the abundant use of decorations seems to be a typical feature of the Euphrates area, where analogies between the EBA and IA costumes can be observed. The transmission of local costumes over time is a significant aspect of the visual communication of terracottas, as this is hardly ever observed in official art. As a matter of fact, this aspect underscores a sense of community at the local level regardless of the political context. The same can be affirmed for the breast-holding gesture, which is the most enduring gesture, lasting for more than two millennia. These observations remind us that most likely, except in rare cases, the represented subjects in Syro-Anatolian coroplastic were real women, with different social roles and perhaps life stages.

As for the children, their presence remains rather limited in all periods (below 5%). During the EBA, IA and the Persian period, when the gender ratio is more balanced, children are equally represented but in limited numbers. However, when this ratio favours female subjects, especially naked female representations, children tend to disappear from coroplastic productions. Furthermore, certain types of female figurines are systematically never associated with children, such as the Astarte Plaques. Even in the Persian period when children appear with these plaques, in the reality, they are portrayed riding a horse or a camel.

Why are children so rare in the coroplastic of the northern Levant, especially in some periods? It is rather difficult to say, but a possible explanation could be that these were objects of the prayers themselves. Indeed, pre-conception prayers were more or less performed depending on historical periods. In periods like the MBA and LBA, a certain anxiety about fertility was more pronounced. This fear was less evident in other periods, especially in the IA, when children seem to even take part in cultic practices, wearing the same costumes as the adults and even imitating their gestures. In any case, future research should focus more on the social rather than the religious aspect of these figurines. This entails determining whether these changes resulted from deliberate political decisions, such as specific policies implemented to control the representation of social bodies, or from generational collective issues like declining fertility rates.

[103] On this topic see Felli 2015.
[104] Marchetti 2000, pp. 249-250; 2001, p. 322; Otto 2016, pp. 128-129. For a critic to this analogy see Pruss 2002, p. 541.

SITE	PERIODS				
el-'Abd (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Abu Danne (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Afis (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Ahmar (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
'Ain Dara	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
'Ain Hassan	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Akhtarin (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Alalakh = Atchana (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Aleppo	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Amarna (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Arjoun	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Arslan Tash	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Arwad	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Arza	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Aushariye (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Banat (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Bashir (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Bazi (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Beydar (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Bi'a (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Brak (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Chatal Höyük	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Chuera (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Dechlis	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Deve Höyük	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Deinit (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Ebla = Mardikh (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Emar = Meskene (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Girnavaz Höyüğü	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Gre Virike Höyüğü	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Habuba Kabira (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Hadidi (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
el-Hajj (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Halaf (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Halawa A (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Halawa B (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Hama	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Hammam et-Turkman (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS

Harran	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Hierapolis = Mambij	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Homs	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Jebel Khalid	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Jerablus Tahtani	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Judaidah (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Jurn Kabir (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Lidar Höyük	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Kannas (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Karkemish Höyük	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Kazel (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Kefrik	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Khalid (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Khamis (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Khan Sheikoun	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Kharab Sayyar	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Kinet Höyük	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Masin (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Mastuma (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Mari = Hariri (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Merji Khamis	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
al Mina	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Mozan (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Mumbidji (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Munbaqa (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Murek	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Neirab	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Qadahiye (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Qadesh = Nebi Mend (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Qara Quzaq (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Qarqur (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
el-Qasis (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Qatna = Mishrife (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
el-Qitar (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Oylum Höyük	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Ras el-Bassit	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Ras Ibn Hani	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Rifaat (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Sam'al = Zincirli Höyük	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS

Şaraga Höyük	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Selemiyeh	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Selenkahiye (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Sheikh Hassan (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Shiukh Fawqani	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Shiukh Tahtani	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Sirkeli Höyük	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Sukas (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
es-Sweyhat (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Tayinat Höyük	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Terqa = Ashara (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Thadayain (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Tilbeşar	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Tille Höyük	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Tilmen Höyük	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Titriş Höyük	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Tuqan (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Ugarit = Ras Shamra	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Umm el-Marra (Tell)	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Zeytinli Bahçe Höyük	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS
Ziyaret Tepe	EBA	MBA	LBA	IRON	PERS

Table 1. List of considered sites.

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FRAMING WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN THE ANCIENT LEVANT: INSIGHTS FROM TERRACOTTA FIGURINES

Marianna Castiglione*

Abstract: Reconstructing the social and cultural history of the Levant from the perspective of ordinary people, as well as understanding the roles of women and children between Persian and Hellenistic periods, are challenging tasks. Archaeological objects and their images, however, can serve as valuable tools for investigating aspects of economy, politics, religion, culture, and both public and private life. This paper will therefore focus on the typological and iconographical evidence for women and children in the coroplastic record from Levantine contexts, with the aim of highlighting, in a diachronic manner, the elements of continuity and innovation in the adoption and selection of different iconographies, while comparing them with other works of art. These items reflect the many facets of women and children, providing a more comprehensive understanding of their roles in Levantine images and art, and, by extension, underscoring the significance of these two groups in daily life.

Keywords: Pre-Hellenistic and Hellenistic Terracotta Figurines; Female World; Childhood; Coroplastic Typologies and Iconographies; Ancient Levant.

1. Terracotta Figurines from the Ancient Levant: An Introduction

Images are socially constructed and can, therefore, reflect the visual context in which they were produced and used. They mirror the attitudes, gestures, social and cultural customs of their users, as well as the self-image of the people who created them. Furthermore, they offer interpretations and reconstructions of ancient realities. In the absence of immaterial and intangible sources, artefacts and their images become valuable tools for investigating the habits of people, especially groups that have been relatively neglected or under-documented. This is particularly true for mortal women and children, two categories that will be examined in depth here through the coroplastic record from the pre-Hellenistic and Hellenistic Levant (Fig. 1).

Recent research on motherhood and childhood in the ancient Mediterranean has predominantly focused on the Greek and Roman worlds[1], often overlooking this geographical area.

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[1] Cfr., for example, more recently Neils – Oakley 2003; Cohen – Rutter 2007; Beaumont 2012; Bonnard – Gherchanoc 2013; Evans Grubbs – Parkin 2013; Bobou 2015.

Fig. 1. Map of the Levant. Created by the author.

Additionally, when scholars include other contexts in their analyses, they tend to rely on sources and artefacts different from coroplastic art[2]. Thus, it seems noteworthy to explore the Levantine customs related to women and children – two categories frequently overlooked by other sources – through a bottom-up approach centered on terracotta figurines.

These widespread statuettes allow for a deeper understanding of the resilience and evolution of behaviors and societies, offering an anthropological perspective as suggested by Arthur Muller[3]. They provide tangible insights into the daily lives of ancient communities and help to highlight and reconstruct changes in the social and cultural roles of women over time, as well as the increasingly prominent roles of children during the Hellenistic period. Moreover, the information provided by these artefacts complements the data offered by other archaeological materials such as statues, reliefs and stelae.

In this study, we adopt a diachronic perspective, analyzing terracotta figurines of women and children dated from the 8th century BCE to the Hellenistic period. The aim is to highlight elements of continuity and innovation in typologies and iconographies. Where possible, we compare these

[2] See Oggiano 2012; Sánchez Romero – Cid López 2018; Beaumont – Dillon – Harrington 2021.
[3] Muller 2017-2018.

items with other types of sources and works of art to gather diverse information and draw broader conclusions about traditions and transformations in lifestyles and societies.

However, before delving into the topic, it is essential to provide some remarks on the available documentation from the Levant and the research methodology employed.

Firstly, it must be emphasized that the retrieval contexts of terracottas are not always clearly interpretable or reliable, due to the historical timing of the excavations and their general conditions. Additionally, it is important to note that figurines are often found in secondary contexts – such as *favissae*, dumping areas or fill deposits – or in stratigraphic layers where the original location is not clearly documented in published field reports. Moreover, many archaeological sites are published only in preliminary versions, without a comprehensive examination and interpretation of the entire context, which is crucial for determining the function of the artefacts or, in the case of cult places, identifying the primary deity or deities worshipped there. These reports also frequently lack in-depth discussions of the statuettes within their archaeological context.

As a result, the chronological classification of terracottas (Late Iron Age, Persian or Hellenistic period) relies primarily on other factors such as technology, iconography and style. Their dating is heavily dependent on comparisons with similar figurines from stratigraphically well-dated archaeological sites or with other artefacts, such as Greek statues, which provide a *terminus post quem*. Additionally, certain chronological phases may not be represented in the retrieval contexts, making it difficult to track changes over time, particularly when those changes are subtle and based solely on technological or iconographic variations.

Lastly, the issue of published works requires attention. Figurines from the ancient Levant are frequently featured in scientific publications, preliminary reports and final monographs, yet a comprehensive and unified corpus, inclusive of their archaeological contexts, is still lacking. The absence of such a resource makes it difficult to gather all available data and conduct diachronic analyses – from the Iron Age to the Hellenistic period – that would enable cross-comparisons between assemblages and across sites[4]. Moreover, many terracotta statuettes reside in museum collections and often remain unpublished. Publications often selectively focus on specific typologies or objects considered particularly significant, rather than providing a comprehensive overview of all the coroplastic material. Consequently, it is challenging to systematically contextualize types, assess the prevalence of certain typologies, establish associations, or derive percentages useful for broader classifications or gender differentiation. Additionally, since archaeological research in the Levant predominantly focuses on pre-Hellenistic periods, Hellenistic figurines are frequently excluded from publications or are inadequately illustrated.

Despite these challenges and numerous difficulties, we aim to diachronically highlight the cultural trends of ancient communities through the coroplastic record from sites that offer a *longue durée* perspective, even if they do not always provide a complete or stratigraphic assemblage. We

[4] Two significant exceptions are the volumes by Nunn 2000 and Darby – de Hulster 2022, which, however, focus on specific chronological periods and/or geographical areas.

focus on artefacts whose typologies and iconographies explicitly reflect and vividly convey the activities, desires and anxieties of mortal women and children.

In our study, we have excluded the enthroned ladies, which are widespread in the Levant, for two main reasons. First, scholars have not consistently interpreted these figures as mortal women, as distinguishing between human and divine figures is often impossible without inscriptions or unambiguous attributes. Second, following the works of Arthur Muller and Stéphanie Huysecom-Haxhi, who suggest that in sanctuaries, dedicants often offer conventional images of themselves rather than representations of the honoured deities, even if we assume that the enthroned ladies depict mortals, they likely represent women who are married and well-educated. However, they lack specific attributes, gestures or symbols that could provide meaningful insights into the social and cultural aspects of contemporary societies, female activities or gender roles.

2. Pre-Hellenistic Terracotta Figurines (8th-Mid 4th Century BCE)

In analyzing Levantine terracotta figurines depicting women and children, dated between the Late Iron Age (8th-6th century BCE) and the Persian period (535-332 BCE)[5], we aim to highlight recurrent typologies across different chronological phases, their distribution within the examined geographical area, as well as the continuities and innovations in techniques, imagery and patterns. These elements serve as indicators of manufacturing traditions, social practices and cultural dynamics.

For the statuettes from this chronological phase, it should be noted that due to the available data, the history of collections and the lack of consistency in the published documentation, as well as the objectives of this article, we are unable to discuss the contexts in detail or provide percentages for each of them. This also prevents an in-depth analysis of the entire assemblage, such as the number of women and children in relation to other figurine types over time, or the typologies in a diachronic perspective. Consequently, we are unable to explore the meanings of the various types within their retrieval contexts or elsewhere, nor to examine in detail the associations between the figurines and their contexts, such as the prevalence of certain statuettes in specific locations, their connections with particular deities (in sanctuaries), or their relation to the gender or status of the deceased (in graves).

2.1. *Female Figurines of the Late Iron Age (8th-6th Century BCE)*

In the Late Iron Age, female terracotta figurines were primarily produced using a "mixed manufacture" technique: the bodies were wheel-made, with single-moulded faces attached to the bodies via a tang, and some body parts or details were handmade[6].

[5] On this topic cfr. Nakhai 2014.
[6] On these figurines cfr. Stern 2003, pp. 313-314; Bolognani 2020, pp. 39-40; Nunn 2022, pp. 71-79.

The contexts in which these figurines were found, although sometimes difficult to accurately identify and reconstruct, include cult places (Sarepta, Kharayeb, Tel Dor)[7], necropolises (Tyre, Akhziv)[8], fortifications (Abel Beth Maacah, Tel Kabri)[9], public buildings and domestic quarters (Beirut-Bey 003, Shiqmona, Megiddo)[10]. These figurines are concentrated in the geographical area between Sarepta and Akko, with notable finds in sites such as Beirut[11], Sidon, Sarepta[12], Kharayeb[13], Tyre[14], Abel Beth Maacah[15], Akhziv[16], Akko[17], Tel Keisan[18], Shiqmona[19], Megiddo[20], Tel Megadim[21], Tel Dor[22] and Ashkelon[23].

Based on the methodological premises regarding the diffusion of types in specific contexts, we attempt to group each typology by its retrieval place:

- statuettes playing musical instruments (Fig. 2.a) – often frame-drums, but also tambourines (*tympanon*), lyres, or double-flutes[24] – have been found in Sidon[25], Sarepta[26] and Kharayeb[27] (cult places), Tyre (necropolis)[28], Abel Beth Maacah (fortification)[29], Akhziv (necropolis)[30], Akko[31], Tel Keisan[32], Shiqmona[33] and Megiddo[34] (public buildings

[7] See most recently Bolognani 2020, p. 40 and notes 38-39 for further bibliography.
[8] See Bolognani 2020, pp. 39-40.
[9] See Panitz-Cohen – Tsoran 2022; Bolognani 2020, p. 40 and note 40 for further bibliography.
[10] See most recently Nunn 2022, pp. 110-113.
[11] Nunn 2022, pp. 110-113.
[12] See Pritchard 1975; Stern 2001, pp. 80-82; 2003, p. 314.
[13] Cfr. Chéhab 1951-1952, p. 19; 1953-1954, pl. II.2; Oggiano 2015a, pp. 508-509, fig. 2; 2015b, pp. 242, 258 fig. 3.c; Oggiano *et al.* 2016, pp. 208-209, figs. 11.2, 11.3.
[14] See most recently Bolognani 2020, p. 39 and note 28, and the items displayed in the Musée National de Beyrouth.
[15] Panitz-Cohen – Tsoran 2022.
[16] In Akhziv, figurines depicting various themes have been discovered, including women cupping their breasts (e.g., Bisi 1997, p. 380), holding a bird as an offering (e.g., an item displayed in the Israel Museum of Jerusalem, IAA: 1944-50, https://www.imj.org.il/en/collections/374272-0), or playing a drum (e.g., Paz 2007, pp. 39-41, 44 fig. 2.4.1-4; Stern 2003, p. 314, for figurines with musical instruments).
[17] Stern 2001, pp. 80-82; 2003, p. 314.
[18] Stern 2001, pp. 80-82; 2003, p. 314.
[19] Paz 2007, pp. 42, 44 fig. 2.4.5. Cfr. Stern 2001, pp. 80-82; 2003, p. 314.
[20] Paz 2007, p. 45; Bolognani 2020, p. 40 and note 35 for further bibliography.
[21] Stern 2001, pp. 80-82; 2003, p. 314.
[22] Stern 2001, pp. 79-82, 496 fig. III.27.
[23] Press 2012; Bolognani 2020, p. 40 and note 35 for further bibliography.
[24] Cfr. Paz 2007, pp. 60-65, 79-80, 94-97, 121-122. Examples of bell-shaped figurines playing a frame-drum or tambourine are also attested in Cyprus, such as at Amathous and Kition (Bisi 1997, p. 383; Yon – Caubet 2010, pp. 60-61).
[25] In Sidon, terracotta figurines depicting women playing a drum have been found.
[26] Stern 2001, pp. 80-82; 2003, p. 314.
[27] For figurines holding a tambourine with a bell-shaped and wheel-made body, see Oggiano 2015b, pp. 242, 258 fig. 3.c; Oggiano *et al.* 2016, pp. 208-209, fig. 11.3.
[28] For figurines playing a double-flute or a drum, see most recently Bolognani 2020, p. 39 and note 28 for further bibliography. In addition, see the items displayed in the Musée National de Beyrouth.
[29] In a casemate structure a mold-made female figurine with a drum has been discovered (Panitz-Cohen – Tsoran 2022).
[30] Stern 2001, pp. 80-82; 2003, p. 314; Mazar 2003, pp. 113, 118 figs. 53-53, 124-125 figs. 133, 135; Paz 2007, pp. 39-41, 44 fig. 2.4.1-4.
[31] Stern 2001, pp. 80-82; 2003, p. 314.
[32] Stern 2001, pp. 80-82; 2003, p. 314.
[33] Paz 2007, pp. 42, 44 fig. 2.4.5. Cfr. Stern 2001, pp. 80-82; 2003, p. 314.
[34] Paz 2007, p. 45.

and domestic spaces), Tel Megadim[35], Tel Dor[36] (cult place);

- figurines holding a bird as an offering, mostly doves (Fig. 2.b), have been discovered in Sarepta[37] (cult place), Tyre[38] and Akhziv[39] (necropolises), Akko and Tel Keisan;
- terracottas cupping their pronounced breasts (Fig. 2.c-d), sometimes with a prominent belly, have been found in Kharayeb (cult place)[40], Akhziv (necropolis)[41], Akko, Megiddo (public buildings and domestic spaces)[42] and Ashkelon[43];
- figurines breastfeeding a child (*kourotrophoi*) have been discovered in Tyre (necropolis)[44];
- figurines holding a child (*kourophoroi*) have been found in Ashkelon[45].

Fig. 2. Late Iron Age female figurines: a. playing a musical instrument, from Akhziv (after Nunn 2022, p. 74 fig. 4.6A); b. holding a bird, from Akhziv (after Stern 2001, fig. 1.42); c-d. cupping their breasts, from Kharayeb (c. after Chéhab 1953-1954, pl. II.2; d. after Oggiano 2015, p. 509 fig. 2). Composition by the author.

[35] Stern 2001, pp. 80-82; 2003, p. 314.
[36] In Tel Dor, figurines played not only frame-drums, as is more common, but also other musical instruments, such as tambourines, lyres and double-flutes (Stern 2001, pp. 79-82, 496 fig. III.27).
[37] In Sarepta female terracottas with a bird or a drum have been discovered (Pritchard 1975, fig. 41.6), as well as a unique figurine holding an amorphous U-shaped object in her arms (Pritchard 1975, fig. 41.1).
[38] See the items displayed in the Musée National de Beyrouth.
[39] See an item displayed in the Israel Museum of Jerusalem, IAA: 1944-50, https://www.imj.org.il/en/collections/374272-0.
[40] Chéhab 1951-1952, p. 19; 1953-1954, pl. II.2; Oggiano 2015a, pp. 508-509, fig. 2; Oggiano *et al.* 2016, pp. 208-209, fig. 11.2. In addition, see an item displayed in the Musée National de Beyrouth.
[41] Bisi 1997, p. 380.
[42] See most recently Bolognani 2020, p. 40 and note 35 for further bibliography.
[43] Cfr. Press 2012, p. 73 n. 63; Bolognani 2020, p. 40 and note 35 for further bibliography.
[44] For the *kourotrophoi*, see the items displayed in the Musée National de Beyrouth.
[45] Press 2012, p. 71 n. 59.

All these terracottas are associated with actions and performances involving women, typically in the context of rituals and religious practices, as evidenced by figurines of musicians with instruments or worshippers presenting offerings. Additionally, they are linked to scenes from daily life, such as figurines of women cupping their breasts, as well as *kourophoroi* and *kourotrophoi*, which are clearly associated with fertility and nursing.

In this context, a particularly notable example is a bell-shaped female terracotta found in a shrine at Sarepta, carefully cradling a crescent-shaped object in her arms (Fig. 3.a). This item remains unidentified by scholars[46], prompting us to propose several interpretations that may offer insights for future research.

If the U-shaped detail cannot be interpreted as a fragmentary dove, we might tentatively propose that it represents an embryo or foetus, symbolizing the "beginning of life" and early pregnancy. A compelling comparison can be made with a tiny human figure from a terracotta boat model, likely dated to the Geometric period, found among votive offerings to *Eileithyia* in the Inatos Cave in Crete (Fig. 3.b)[47]. This figure, positioned at the centre of the boat and surrounded by other figures – possibly women – has been interpreted as a foetus or infant, suggesting that the model

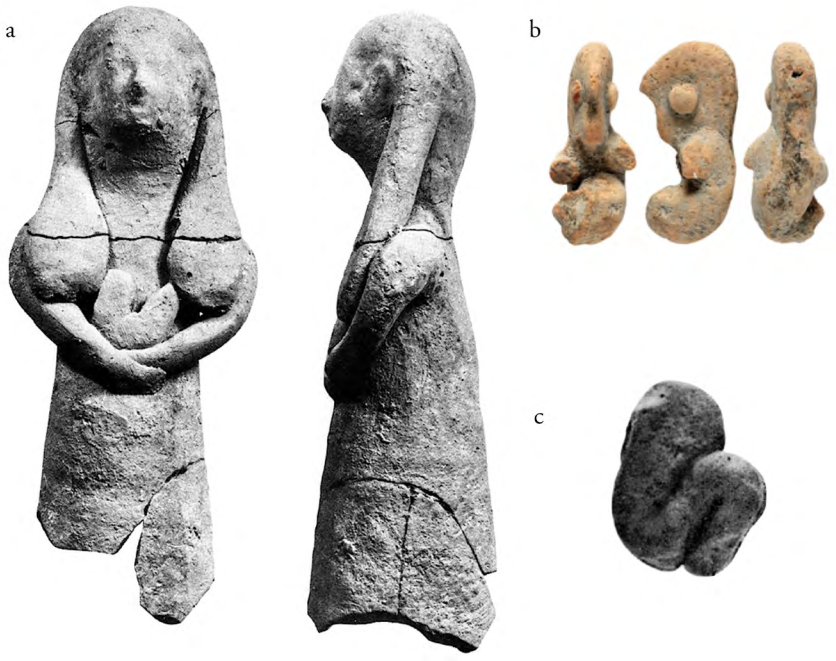

Fig. 3. a. Bell-shaped female terracotta holding a crescent-shaped object, from Sarepta (after Pritchard 1975, p. 23 fig. 41.1); b. Human foetus or infant from a votive ship model found in the Inatos Cave, Crete (after Kanta 2022a, p. 28 fig. 27.c); c. "Embryo" from Juktas, Crete (after Kanta 2022a, p. 28 fig. 27.b). Composition by the author.

[46] Cfr. Pritchard 1975, p. 23, fig. 41.1; Nunn 2022, pp. 74-76, fig. 4.7.
[47] Cfr. Kanta 2022a, p. 27; 2022b, pp. 80, 133.

symbolized a journey through amniotic fluid with divine midwives assisting[48]. Earlier finds, such as the so-called Juktas embryos (Fig. 3.c)[49], and some items like three statuettes from Myrina (Asia Minor), which depict seated women with a removable child or foetus in their bellies[50], support this interpretation. Additionally, the small terracotta balls (approximately 1-2 cm in diameter) found in votive wombs at Greek sanctuaries (e.g., Epidaurus, Sicyon, Delphi) and more frequently in Etruria (e.g., Vulci, Tarquinia) and central and southern Italy (e.g., Latium, Campania, Daunia, western Lucania) could also represent embryos, emphasizing the early phase of intrauterine life[51]. Such iconographic evidence reflects a collective understanding of life in the womb and symbolizes the unborn child. Consequently, it is possible that the statuette from Sarepta was dedicated by a worshipper seeking to ensure a favorable outcome for conception and pregnancy, «revealing how fertility and childbirth were central to perceptions of good fortune and gender identity»[52]. Alternatively, the object may symbolize a miscarried embryo or foetus[53], with the mother expressing previous reproductive failure and seeking divine assistance for future successful pregnancy.

Preliminary stages of conception and miscarriage are discussed in ancient written sources such as the works by Hippocrates, Aristotle, Galen and other medical authors, who were deeply concerned with reproduction. Their «speculations on the emergence of human life and the status of the embryo have prompted intense medical, philosophical, religious and legal debates»[54]. These texts offer valuable insights into cultural views on conception and the "beginning of life" in antiquity. In the better-documented Greek and Roman contexts, attention to the embryo or foetus often centered on the mother and her protection, rather than the "human" status of the embryo or foetus, which was not a significant concern for the wider social community[55]. Moreover, such moments in female life are rarely represented in ancient visual culture, especially in the Levant, where no compelling evidence or parallels for the Sarepta item have yet been found. The rarity of similar artefacts across the Mediterranean, along their symbolic implications, should be interpreted within the broader trend in which maternal concerns focused primarily on personal fertility, well-being and adherence to cultural norms regarding social roles. Thus, explicit iconography seeking divine protection for the unborn child was uncommon[56].

[48] Kanta 2022a, p. 27.
[49] Kanta 2022a, p. 27.
[50] Cfr. Ducaté-Paarmann 2005, pp. 45-46, 49; Wise 2007, pp. 132-133 fig. 16, 278-279 n. 2.27.
[51] Cfr. Dasen 2013a; Graham 2013; Björklund 2017.
[52] For the quotation, see Graham 2013, p. 222.
[53] Cfr. Grmek – Gourevitch 2000, pp. 277-302 (for images related to sex); 280-286 (for images related to childbirth and miscarriage).
[54] For the quotation and written sources discussing this specific female status, see Dasen 2013a. Cfr. Bernard *et al.* 1989; Lambrugo 2020, pp. 106-112 (for discussion on the status, dignity and value of embryos/foetuses in litterary sources).
[55] On this aspect, see Bernard *et al.* 1989.
[56] Cfr. Dasen 2013a; Graham 2013; Björklund 2017.

2.2. *Late Iron Age and Beyond: The Pregnant Woman-Type and Its Variants*

The so-called *dea Tyria gravida*, a depiction of a pregnant woman named for her prominent, swollen abdomen, was one of the most enduring subjects in the Levant. This type first emerged in the 8th century BCE and persisted until the 5th-4th centuries BCE, with its peak production occurring during the 7th century and a notable decline in the 6th century BCE[57].

These figurines, created using a single mould, have been discovered in various contexts, primarily in cult places (Amrit, Byblos, Sarepta, Kharayeb, Bethsaida, Tel Dor, Makmish, Tel es-Safi, Tel Ṣippor)[58], but also in necropolises (Akhziv)[59], fortifications (Beirut, Tel Kabri)[60], as well as buildings and urban or domestic areas (Abu Hawam, Tell es-Sa'idiyeh)[61]. They were predominantly found at coastal sites between Tell Sukas and Tel Dor, with some occurrences further south in Makmish and in inland locations such as Tel Ṣippor. The primary centres for this typology include Tell Sukas[62], Antaradous[63], Amrit[64], Byblos[65], Beirut[66], Sidon[67], Sarepta[68], Tyre[69], Kharayeb[70], Akhziv[71], Tel Kabri[72], Akko[73], Bethsaida[74], Abu Hawam[75], Tel Dor[76], Tel el-Husn/Beth Shean[77], Tell

[57] For the pregnant woman figurine, the so-called *dea Tyria gravida*, see Culican 1969; Caubet 2002, pp. 149-150; Lipiński 2003, pp. 301-302; Nakhai 2014, pp. 173-174; Montanari 2021; Nunn 2022, pp. 67-71; Bolognani 2023 for an updated comprehensive study. For the chronology, see more specifically Bolognani 2020, p. 42 and note 61; 2023, pp. 239-246.

[58] These figurines have been discovered in shrines (Sarepta), temple areas (Byblos), *favissae* (Amrit, Kharayeb, Tel Dor, Makmish, Tel Ṣippor, Tel es-Safi) and sanctuaries, such as those in Palestine. On this topic, see most recently Montanari 2021, p. 188; Bolognani 2023.

[59] Cfr. Avigad 1960, p. 94; Bolognani 2023, p. 241.

[60] See, most recently, Nunn 2022, pp. 110-113 (Beirut); Bolognani 2023, pp. 241-242 (Beirut, Tel Kabri).

[61] Cfr. Avigad 1960, p. 94; Culican 1969, p. 39; Montanari 2021, p. 187 and note 28 for further bibliography (Abu Hawam); Nunn 2000, p. 54 type 18.a; Montanari 2021, p. 187 and note 34 for further bibliography (Tell es-Sa'idiyeh).

[62] See, most recently, Bolognani 2023, p. 241 with further bibliography.

[63] Musée du Louvre, inv. AO 26572. Cfr. Heuzey 1923, p. 59 nn. 193-194, pl. VI.3, VI.5.

[64] Musée du Louvre, inv. AM 335 (from Cyprus and found along the Syrian coast). Cfr. Culican 1969, p. 40; Nunn 2000, p. 53 type 18.a; Bolognani 2023, pp. 240-241 with further bibliography

[65] Cfr. Dunand 1937, pl. LI.6528; Nunn 2000, p. 53 type 18.a; Montanari 2021, p. 187 and note 24 for further bibliography; Bolognani 2023, p. 242.

[66] See, most recently, Nunn 2022, pp. 110-113; Bolognani 2023, p. 242.

[67] The figurines come from Dakerman 55 Site, which revealed both Hellenistic and Iron Age occupation. The site features numerous urban constructions, including walls, foundations, stoves and wells; however, it is primarily a cemetery. This context was presented by S. Shrara at the conference *Les figurines de terre cuite hellénistiques et romaines d'origine libanaise*, held in Beirut (2019), with the proceedings forthcoming.

[68] Cfr. Pritchard 1975, pp. 36-37; Nunn 2000, p. 53 type 18.a; Bolognani 2023, p. 240.

[69] Nunn 2000, pp. 53 type 18.a, 54-55 type 18.e, pl. 22.60.

[70] Cfr. Chéhab 1951-1952, p. 19; 1953-1954, pl. II.1; Kaoukabani 1973, p. 46, pl. VII.4; Nunn 2000, p. 53 type 18.a; Oggiano 2015a, pp. 515-516, fig. 7; 2015b, pp. 241-242, 258 fig. 2.a.

[71] Cfr. Avigad 1960, p. 94; Culican 1969, p. 39; Nunn 2000, p. 53 type 18.a; Montanari 2021, p. 187 and note 35 for further bibliography.

[72] See, most recently, Bolognani 2023, p. 241 with further bibliography.

[73] See, most recently, Bolognani 2023, p. 241 with further bibliography.

[74] See, most recently, Bolognani 2023, p. 240 with further bibliography. For some unpublished specimens, refer to the field reports available online: https://bethsaidaarchaeology.org/publications/ (particularly the reports from the 2006, 2007 and 2018 excavation seasons).

[75] Cfr. Avigad 1960, p. 94; Culican 1969, p. 39; Montanari 2021, p. 187 and note 28 for further bibliography.

[76] Cfr. Stern 1982, pp. 38-39, 51 pl. II.4; Oggiano 2005, p. 199.

[77] http://www.antiquities.org.il/t/Item_en.aspx?pic_id=2&rock=6&CurrentPageKey=31_1; Fitzgerald 1931, p. 33, pl.

Fig. 4. Figurines of pregnant women from: a. Kharayeb (after Oggiano 2022, p. 310 fig. 5.a); b. Antaradous (after Nunn 2022, p. 69 fig. 4.1). Composition by the author.

es-Sa'idiyeh[78], Makmish[79], Tel es-Safi[80], Ashdod[81], Ashkelon[82] and Tel Ṣippor[83].

These statuettes depict an enthroned woman dressed in a long, plain robe with three-quarter-length sleeves, her headdress featuring side locks behind the ears and a veil covering her head. The pregnant woman is typically seated on a narrow, high-backed chair, with her right hand resting on the abdomen and her left hand placed on the knee (Fig. 4). This representation is found in figurines from Antaradous[84], Tyre[85], Kharayeb[86], Akhziv[87], Tel Dor[88], Tel el-Husn/Beth Shean[89] and Makmish[90], and is also widely attested in Cyprus[91]. Occasionally, both hands are positioned on the knees, as seen in some seated terracottas from Sarepta and Akhziv[92]. Rare instances include

XXIV.3. Cfr. Avigad 1960, p. 94.
[78] Cfr. Nunn 2000, p. 54 type 18.a; Montanari 2021, p. 187 and note 34 for further bibliography.
[79] Avigad 1960, p. 93, pl. 11.A-B; 1993, pp. 933-934.
[80] Cfr. Culican 1969, p. 39; Montanari 2021, p. 187 and note 33 for further bibliography.
[81] See, most recently, Bolognani 2023, p. 241 with further bibliography.
[82] See Press 2012, pp. 77-78 nn. 71 and 73, 199-200; Montanari 2021, p. 187 and note 31; Bolognani 2023, p. 241.
[83] Negbi 1964, p. 188, pl. 43.B; 1966, pp. 3, 12 nn. 19-20, pl. VI.
[84] See, for example, the item displayed in the Musée du Louvre, inv. AO 26572. Cfr. Heuzey 1923, p. 59 nn. 193-194, pl. VI.3, 5.
[85] See, for example, the figurines displayed in the American University of Beirut Archaeological Museum, inv. # 87.7 (Nunn 2000, pp. 54-55, pl. 22.60) and inv. # 88.1. Additionally, see a terracotta figurine in the Musée National de Beyrouth, which shows traces of brown/black decoration, likely representing a painted necklace with pendants.
[86] Cfr. Chéhab 1951-1952, p. 19; 1953-1954, pl. II.1; Kaoukabani 1973, p. 46, pl. VII.4; Nunn 2000, p. 53 type 18.a; Oggiano 2015a, pp. 515-516, fig. 7; 2015b, pp. 241-242, 258 fig. 2.a; 2020, pp. 273-275. Furthermore, see terracotta figurines displayed in the Musée National de Beyrouth.
[87] Cfr. Culican 1969, p. 39; Nunn 2000, p. 53 type 18.a; Montanari 2021, p. 187 and note 35 for further bibliography.
[88] Oggiano 2005, p. 199.
[89] Fitzgerald 1931, p. 33, pl. XXIV.3.
[90] Avigad 1960, p. 93, pl. 11.A-B; 1993, pp. 933-934.
[91] See, most recently, Karageorghis – Merker – Mertens 2016, pp. 122-123, cat. 209-210 (catalogue entries by V. Karageorghis); Hermary 2021; Maillard 2021; Montanari 2021, p. 185 and note 5 for further bibliography; Maillard 2022, pp. 521-522, figs. 2-3; 2023 (*passim*). For some examples from Amathous and Kition see Hermary 1996, p. 20, pl. VIII.4-5.
[92] On these manufacts, classified as Type 2, Subtype 2a, see Bolognani 2023, pp. 250-251.

standing figures with the right hand resting on the pregnant belly and the left arm hanging down, documented in Tel Dor[93] and possibly Tel el-Husn/Beth Shean[94].

Several probable variants of the canonical seated, fully dressed pregnant woman can be identified from the following sites:

- Amrit, where a terracotta figurine depicts a woman holding a child in her arms[95];
- Antaradous, Sidon, and Kharayeb, where some figurines hold a palmette-shaped object (possibly a fan or mirror)[96] (Fig. 5.a);
- Tripoli, featuring a single figurine of a woman holding a cake as an offering[97];
- Byblos, with a single artefact depicting a woman carrying a spherical object[98];
- Kharayeb, where some examples show women holding a circular item (possibly a disc, drum, or fan) against their chest[99] (Fig. 5.b);
- Tripoli[100], Sidon[101] and Kharayeb[102], where some statuettes are shown playing a frame-drum, either positioned vertically between the breasts or placed horizontally on them[103] (Fig. 5.c).

A particularly noteworthy example within this typology is a single-mould figurine discovered in Sidon[104] (Fig. 6.a). This piece depicts a standing pregnant woman with both hands resting on her flat belly, a posture also seen in a few items from Sarepta. While her appearance and attire conform to common representations of pregnant women, this statuette possesses several distinctive features that set it apart. It is notably larger in height (approximately 31.5 cm) and differs in its manufacture compared to other figurines of pregnant women. Moreover, the statuette displays a more intricate hairstyle, with individually rendered locks that may have been styled into tiny braids, reminiscent of sculptural techniques. Another unique characteristic is the unconventional gesture of lifting her dress, a feature rarely observed in similar representations.

[93] Stern 1982, pp. 38-39, 51 pl. II.4.
[94] http://www.antiquities.org.il/t/Item_en.aspx?pic_id=2&rock=6&CurrentPageKey=31_1; Fitzgerald 1931, p. 33, pl. XXIV.3.
[95] Culican 1969, p. 40.
[96] Cfr. Culican 1969, p. 40; Kaoukabani 1973, p. 47, pl. VIII.1; Nunn 2000, p. 54, type 18.c, pl. 22.58 (Musée du Louvre, inv. AO 22938). Similar figurines are also attested in Cyprus (Heuzey 1923, p. 59 n. 192, pl. VI.2) and Carthage. On these manufacts, classified as Subtype 2b, see Bolognani 2023, pp. 250-251.
[97] Culican 1969, p. 40.
[98] Culican 1969, p. 40.
[99] Chéhab 1951-1952, p. 19; 1953-1954, pl. I.3; Nunn 2022, pp. 68-69, fig. 4.2.
[100] Musée du Louvre, inv. AO 25947. Cfr. Heuzey 1923, p. 60 n. 195, pl. VI.4.
[101] For female terracotta figurines representing tambourine (*tympanon*) players from necropolises, see Contenau 1920, pp. 305-317. Similar items have been discovered at Dakerman 55 Site, which includes urban constructions (walls, foundations, stoves and wells) alongside tombs. This context was presented by S. Shrara at the conference *Les figurines de terre cuite hellénistiques et romaines d'origine libanaise*, held in Beirut (2019), with the proceedings forthcoming.
[102] For figurines holding a frame-drum or a tambourine in both described positions, see Chéhab 1951-1952, p. 19; 1953-1954, pl. I.3-4; Oggiano 2015a, p. 515 fig. 7 (left); 2015b, p. 258 fig. 2 (left).
[103] On these items, classified as Subtype 1a and Subtype 1b, see Bolognani 2023, pp. 248-249.
[104] Musée du Louvre, inv. AO 2207; cfr. Bisi 1997, p. 382; Nunn 2022, pp. 104-105, fig. 4.32; Bolognani 2023, p. 252 (here the item is classified as Subtype 2c).

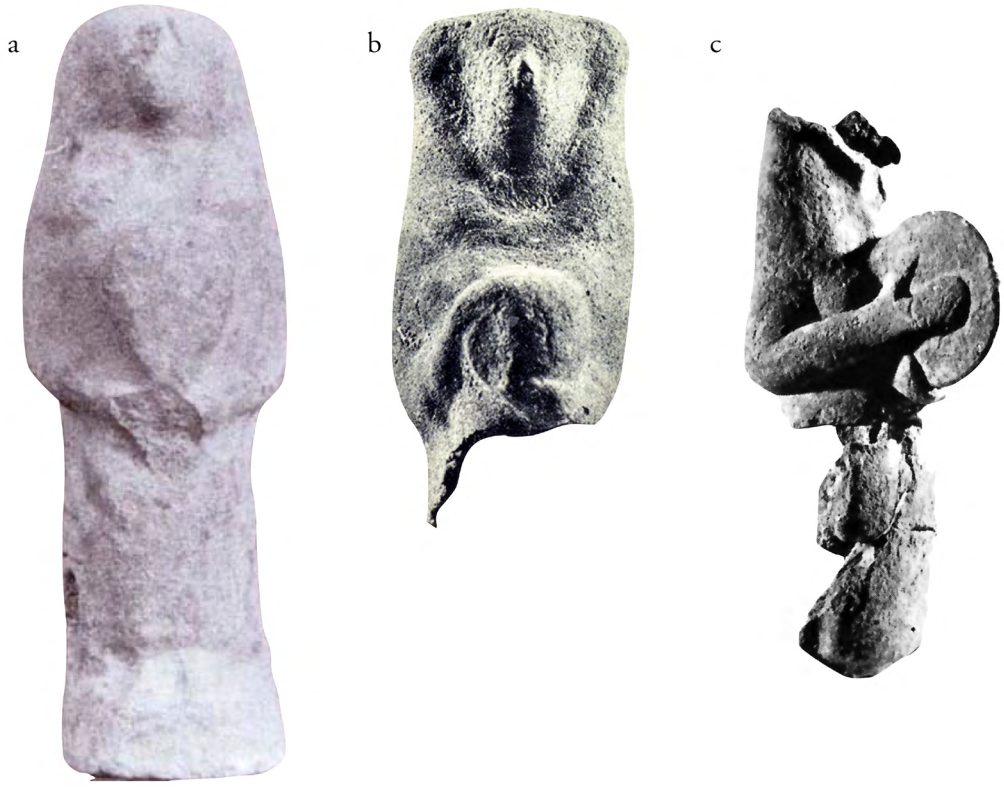

Fig. 5. Figurines holding a palmette-shaped object, a circular item, and a frame-drum from Kharayeb (after: a. Kaoukabani 1973, pl. VIII.1; b. Chéhab 1953-1954, pl. I.3; c. Chéhab 1953-1954, pl. I.4). Composition by the author.

Before engaging in interpretation, it is essential to emphasize that the unusual characteristics – specifically the hairstyle and hand gesture – may serve as key elements in identifying this rare iconographic type. The Sidonian figurine can be compared to a fragmentary terracotta from Kharayeb, which exhibits a similar hairstyle and hand gesture[105] (Fig. 6.b). Given the rarity of this typology within terracotta assemblages, it is plausible to propose that these items were produced either in the same workshop or in different ateliers using similar moulds and patterns from a shared iconographic repertoire. These details offer valuable insights into ancient production centers that remain otherwise undocumented by archaeological excavations.

Furthermore, the intact artefact from Sidon suggests that the likely gesture of lifting the dress was intended to direct the observer's attention to two small legs visible at the base of the garment. Astrid Nunn has interpreted this figurine as representing a woman «giving birth»[106] based on this detail. However, considering the proportions of the legs, which seem to belong to a child rather than the woman, this depiction is unusual both in its iconography and in the experience it seeks to represent.

[105] Kaoukabani 1973, p. 47, pl. VIII.2.
[106] Nunn 2022, p. 104, fig. 4.32.

Fig. 6. Standing pregnant women figurines from: a. Sidon (after Nunn 2022, p. 105 fig. 4.32); b. Kharayeb (after Kaoukabani 1973, pl. VIII.2). Composition by the author.

A breech delivery, a life-threatening situation for both mother and child and considered *contra naturam* by ancient sources[107], was likely depicted here to symbolize a more complex concern. Rather than portraying an actual childbirth scene, the figurine may represent the anxieties surrounding a potential breech birth. The iconography reflects the fears of a mother or family regarding the unborn child's incorrect position, which would have been more appropriately cephalic in the later stages of gestation. Therefore, it seems plausible that the dedicators of such figurines sought divine intervention to correct this feared and dangerous condition prior to childbirth, as symbolized by the depiction of the tiny legs.

Additionally, a type of pregnant figurine found in Beirut, dating from the 8th century BCE and extending into the Persian period, is particularly noteworthy. Among the many locally produced statuettes, the most prevalent type depicts a naked female figure standing with outstretched arms, with two pendulous locks of hair falling onto her breasts and manufactured using a univalve mould (Fig. 7). Some of these figurines are slender, prompting debates about whether they represent pregnant women, while others feature a slightly protuberant belly, suggesting a possible pregnant status[108]. A similar artefact has likely been discovered in Sidon as well[109].

In conclusion, while the interpretation of pregnant figurines remains debated and perhaps not definitively resolved – whether they represent a goddess, a mortal woman, or a figure that straddles the line between human and divine[110] – the widespread use of these statuettes can be attributed

[107] Cfr. Hp. *Mul.* I 33; Plin. *Nat.* VII 17.

[108] See, for example, the item from Beirut displayed in the American University of Beirut Archaeological Museum, inv. # 63.20. Cfr. Gubel 1982, pp. 227-228, fig. 2; Elayi 2010, pp. 164-165 fig. 17.a; Nunn 2000, p. 56 type 21.a, pl. 23.68; Oggiano 2020, p. 273; Nunn 2022, pp. 95-96, fig. 4.23 (for the "not pregnant interpretation"). For the naked female figurines simultaneously outstretching their arms and cupping their breasts, found in Beirut and at Tel Megadim, see Bolognani 2020, pp. 45-46 and notes 79-80 for further bibliography.

[109] Cfr. Gubel 1982, p. 228; Nunn 2000, p. 56 type 21.a, pl. 23.68.

[110] For the interpretation of this kind of statuettes, see Bolognani 2023, pp. 258-261. Cfr. Oggiano – Porzia 2023. For the broader debate on whether terracotta figurines represent goddess or human beings, cfr. Huysecom-Haxhi – Muller 2007; Dasen – Prescendi 2022, pp. 29-30.

Fig. 7. Standing naked women with outstretched arms from Beirut (after: a. Elayi 2010, p. 165 fig. 17.a; b. Nunn 2022, p. 96 fig. 4.23; c. Oggiano 2020, p. 272 fig. 3.e; d. Picaud 2015, p. 292 fig. 6). Composition by the author.

to their polysemic value, bridging the divine and human realms through a shared gesture. These figurines depicted the universal condition of advanced pregnancy, and their iconography extended beyond the obvious desires for fertility and motherhood. More importantly, they addressed post-conception hopes and the anxieties surrounding a full-term pregnancy and a safe delivery – an essential aspect of fertility understood in a broader context[111].

2.3. *Persian Period Figurines (535-332 BCE)*

During the Persian period, a significant change in manufacturing techniques occurred, influenced by Greek practices and identified by Ephraim Stern as a clear chronological marker[112]. In this phase, anthropomorphic figurines were predominantly hollow, front-moulded using a univalve mould,

[111] Cfr. Oggiano 2015a, pp. 515-516; Bolognani 2023, pp. 260-261.
[112] Stern 2003, p. 313.

with smoothed backs, either fully or partially solid. Occasionally, double moulded figurines were also produced[113]. Despite these technical innovations, there was substantial continuity in the representation of gender, with many figurines continuing to depict women engaged in various activities. However, new typologies emerged during this period, notably featuring individual depictions of children.

2.3.1. Female Figurines

In the Persian period, the so-called *dea Tyria gravida* was also documented[114] and discovered in various contexts, including Amrit[115], Sarepta[116] and Kharayeb[117] (cult places), Akhziv (necropolis)[118], Akko[119], Tel Keisan[120], Abu Hawam (buildings and urban/domestic areas)[121], Tel Dor (cult place)[122], Tel el-Husn/Beth Shean[123], Tell Es-Saʿidiyeh (buildings and urban/domestic areas)[124], Makmish (cult place)[125], Tel es-Safi[126], Tel Ṣippor[127] (cult place).

During this phase, additional representations of pregnant women are documented. For instance, 26 pillar figurines found in the Sidonian harbor of Tyre depict veiled females dressed in a *himation* and chiton or peplos, illustrating women in a 4-5-month stage of pregnancy[128]. Similarly, items from the assemblage at Shavei Zion portray pregnant women with protruding bellies, some with their left hand resting on their abdomen[129], while others depict standing, naked figures with their right hand in an adoration gesture and their left hand held to the breast[130] (Fig. 8). Moreover, the association of naked, standing statuettes with outstretched arms – possibly depicting pregnant women – found in Beirut, and previously discussed in relation to an earlier phase, alongside figurines of the "Persian rider" type, suggests that this female typology may also extend into the

[113] For these figurines, see Culican 1969, p. 35; Stern 2003, p. 313; Bolognani 2020, pp. 42-46; Nunn 2022, pp. 67-71.
[114] For the terracotta figurines specifically dated to the Persian period (classified as Type 3), see Bolognani 2023, pp. 243-244, 246, 252-254.
[115] Lembke, 2004, p. 35-36, 87, 154 nn. 15-16, 17 dubious, pl. 3.g-h.
[116] Terracotta figurines dated back to the 6th-5th century BCE. See, most recently, Bolognani 2023, p. 242 with previous bibliography.
[117] Terracotta figurines dated back to the 5th-4th century BCE. See, most recently, Bolognani 2023, pp. 242-243 with previous bibliography.
[118] See, most recently, Bolognani 2023, p. 244 with previous bibliography.
[119] See, most recently, Bolognani 2023, p. 244 with previous bibliography.
[120] See, most recently, Bolognani 2023, p. 243 with previous bibliography.
[121] Terracotta figurines dated back to the 6th-4th century BCE. See, most recently, Bolognani 2023, p. 244 with previous bibliography.
[122] See, most recently, Bolognani 2023, p. 243 with previous bibliography.
[123] See, most recently, Bolognani 2023, p. 244 with previous bibliography.
[124] Terracotta figurines dated back to the 6th-4th century BCE. See, most recently, Bolognani 2023, p. 244 with previous bibliography.
[125] See, most recently, Bolognani 2023, pp. 243-244 with previous bibliography.
[126] See, most recently, Bolognani 2023, p. 243 with previous bibliography.
[127] Terracotta figurines dated back to the 5th-4th century BCE. See, most recently, Bolognani 2023, p. 243 with previous bibliography.
[128] Castellvi *et al.* 2007, pp. 77-91.
[129] Many of the figurines from Shavei Zion have parallels in Kharayeb, Tel Dor, Elyachin, Makmish, Tel Ṣippor and Tel Halif (Edrey – Erlich – Yasur-Landau 2020, pp. 252-253, 257-258, fig. 3.3).
[130] Cfr. Culican 1969, p. 40; Edrey – Erlich – Yasur-Landau 2020.

Fig. 8. Standing naked pregnant women from Tyre (after Culican 1969, p. 38 pl. II).

Persian period[131]. This hypothesis is further supported by comparisons between the low flared *polos* or *stephane* seen on some naked cruciform figurines from Beirut[132] (Fig. 7.c) and similar items worn by contemporary Greek-style figurines with outstretched arms (Figs. 12.d, 13.e, 14).

In the Persian period, as in the previous phase, the gesture of holding the breasts is evident in naked, standing figurines with prominent bellies, which support or squeeze their heavy breasts with their hands (Fig. 9). These statuettes primarily appear in cultic and funerary contexts across regions from Beirut to Akhziv[133]. They have been found in centres such as Beirut[134] and Sidon[135] (necropolises), Sarepta[136] and Kharayeb[137] (cult places), Akhziv (necropolis)[138] and Tel Dor (cult place), where both standing figurines squeezing their breasts and a possible seated woman holding her breasts have been discovered[139]. Similar finds have possibly been identified at Tel el-Husn/Beth Shean[140], Makmish[141] and Tel Ṣippor[142] (cult places). This iconography is part of a broader semantic system related to fertility, maternity, nursing and breastfeeding.

[131] Cfr. Gubel 1982, p. 228; Nunn 2000, p. 56 type 21.a. The figurine from Beirut, published by S. Picaud (2015, pp. 291-292, fig. 6), is identified as a woman with her hands on her breasts. However, since the lower part of the body resembles the legs of the naked statuettes with outstretched arms, we propose considering this item as belonging to the latter type.

[132] Cfr. the statuettes published by Oggiano 2020, pp. 272-273, fig. 3.e; Orsingher – Rivera-Hernández 2021, p. 83, fig. 4.2.

[133] Nunn 2022, pp. 67-71.

[134] See, for example, an item displayed in the American University of Beirut Archaeological Museum, inv. # 88.2. Cfr. Elayi 2010, pp. 164-165 fig. 17.d. In the Saifi 477 necropolis in Beirut, female figurines supporting their breasts have been discovered. This context was presented by J. Chanteau and J. Nassar at the conference *Les figurines de terre cuite hellénistiques et romaines d'origine libanaise*, held in Beirut (2019), with the proceedings forthcoming.

[135] For the figurines found in the Sidonian necropolis, cfr. Conteau 1920; Nunn 2000, p. 49 type 11.a, pl. 18.35 (Musée du Louvre, inv. AO 7488b).

[136] Pritchard 1975, p. 37. Cfr. Nunn 2000, p. 52 type 17. Furthermore, see a terracotta figurine displayed in the Musée National de Beyrouth.

[137] Kaoukabani 1973, p. 46, pl. VII.1-3; Oggiano 2022, p. 310, fig. 5.c; Nunn 2022, pp. 68, 70 fig. 4.4. Cfr. Nunn 2000, p. 52 type 17, pl. 22.55 (= Chéhab 1951-1952, p. 12; 1953-1954, pl. I.1), for an uncertain fragment of the same type. Additionally, see the terracotta figurine displayed in the Musée National de Beyrouth.

[138] Nunn 2000, p. 52 type 17, pl. 23.56 (Musée du Louvre, inv. AO 1848).

[139] Cfr. Stern 1982, pp. 38, 50 pl. I.3; 2001, p. 79 fig. I.41; Oggiano 2005, p. 199.

[140] Fitzgerald 1931, p. 33, pl. XXIV.2.

[141] Avigad 1960, p. 93; 1993, p. 934.

[142] Negbi 1966, pp. 3, 11-12 n. 15, pl. V.

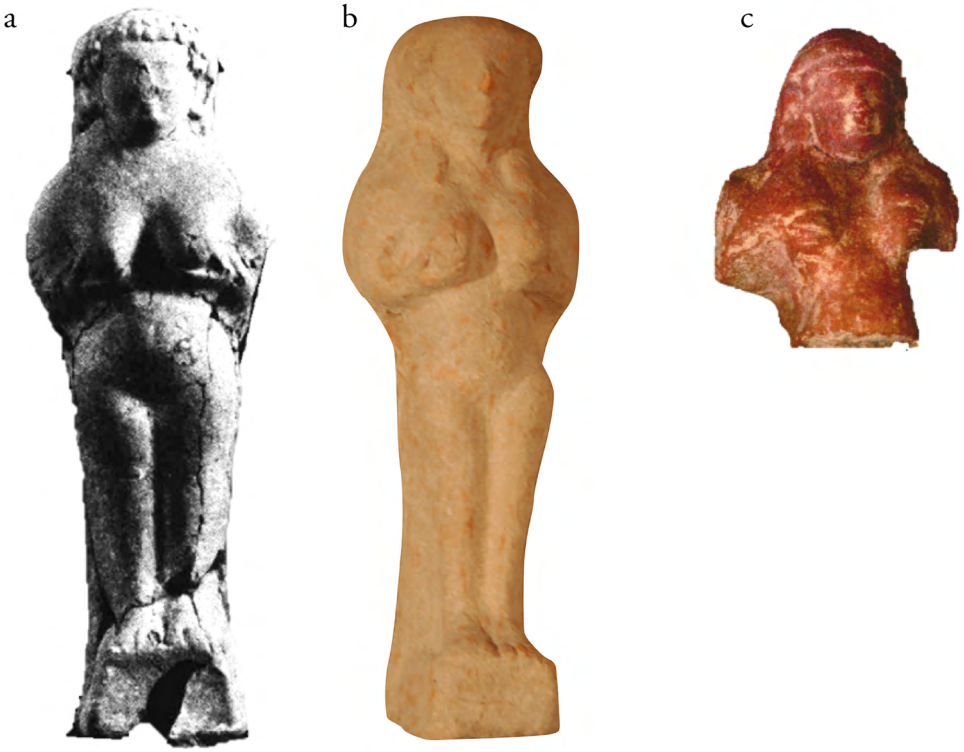

Fig. 9. Figurines holding their breasts from: a-b. Kharayeb (a. after Kaoukabani 1973, pl. VII.3; b. after Oggiano 2022, p. 310 fig. 5.c); c. Beirut (after Elayi 2010, p. 165 fig. 17.d). Composition by the author.

During this period, there was an increased focus on depicting actions directly related to childbirth and the mother-child relationship. This is exemplified by seated women breastfeeding a child, as found in Achziv (necropolis)[143], or by standing figurines holding a baby – often hand-modelled and typically carried on the left arm. Such iconography has been documented in both cult places and sacred assemblages, including Kharayeb[144], Shavei Zion[145], Tel Dor (where figurines depict standing women both carrying and nursing the child[146]) and Makmish (where some standing terracottas are also shown breastfeeding[147]). Additionally, these statuettes have been discovered in the necropolises of Sidon[148] (Fig. 10).

[143] Nunn 2000, p. 54 type 18.d, pl. 23.59 (Musée du Louvre, inv. Louvre AO 1834).
[144] Figurines from Kharayeb of this type are either hollow and double-moulded (Chéhab 1951-1952, pp. 12, 19-20; 1953-1954, pl. II.4-5) or solid and single-moulded (Musée National de Beyrouth, inv. 92990 and 93062. © Kharayeb Archaeological Project).
[145] Some figurines from the assemblage at Shavei Zion, which have parallels in Kharayeb, Tel Dor, Elyachin, Makmish, Tel Ṣippor and Tel Halif, appear to depict a standing female carrying a child (Edrey – Erlich – Yasur-Landau 2020, pp. 252-253, 257-258, fig. 3.2).
[146] The figurines from Tel Dor are hollow, moulded on the front and smoothed on the back. Cfr. Stern 1982, pp. 38-40, pl. II.5; Nunn 2022, pp. 68-69, fig. 4.3.
[147] Avigad 1960, p. 93, p. 11.c; 1993, p. 934. In Cyprus, the type of *dea Tyria gravida kourotrophos* is also known (cfr. Yon – Caubet 2010, pp. 63-64; Ulbrich 2016; Maillard 2022, pp. 521-522, fig. 3).
[148] Cfr. Conteau 1920; Nunn 2000, pp. 49-50, pl. 19.39 (Musée du Louvre, inv. AO 1467).

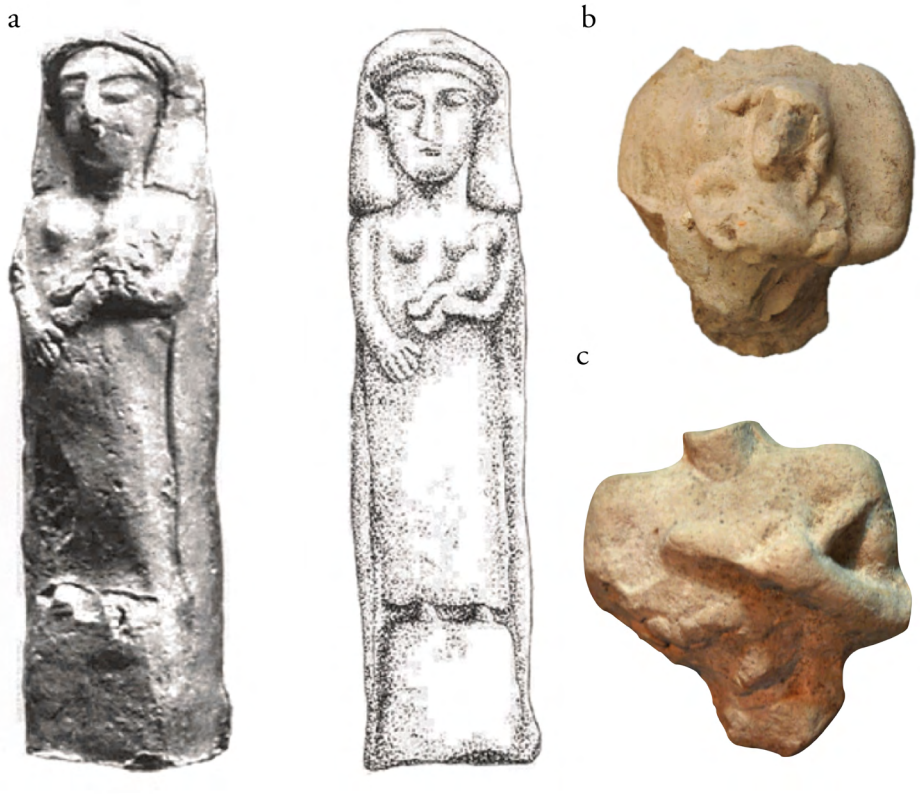

Fig. 10. a. *Kourotrophos* from Tel Dor (after Nunn 2022, p. 69 fig. 4.3); b-c. *Kourophoros* and *kourotrophos* from Kharayeb (photos by Ida Oggiano © Kharayeb Archaeological Project). Composition by the author.

In Idumaea, at sites such as Tel Ṣippor[149], Maresha[150], Tel Erani, Tel Lachish, the Beersheba region[151] and Tel Halif[152], the *kourophoros* iconography displays a variation: semi-draped, standing women in a frontal pose carrying an older child. The child is either held upright on the left arm against the shoulder or seated on the left shoulder, leaning on the mother's head, with the legs supported by the left arm (Fig. 11). This typology is derived from a Greek-Ionian model, characterized by greater plasticity and three-dimensionality[153]. Similar poses are documented in contemporary figurines from Greece, Rhodes[154], Magna Graecia[155] and Sicily[156]. This iconography

[149] Negbi 1966, p. 10, pl. I.1-2. Cfr. Erlich 2019a, pp. 261-262.
[150] Erlich 2014, pp. 51-56; 2019a, pp. 261-264.
[151] Erlich 2014, p. 51.
[152] Erlich 2019a, pp. 261-263.
[153] Cfr. Erlich 2014, p. 51. This type is widespread in the Mediterranean and appears to be of Rhodian origin (Hadzisteliou-Price 1978, pp. 30-31).
[154] Hadzisteliou-Price 1978, pp. 30-31.
[155] Cfr. Miller Ammerman 2007, pp. 137-138 (*Paestum*, early 4th century BCE); Hadzisteliou-Price 1978, pp. 30-31 (*Paestum*, *Taras*).
[156] See, for example, the terracotta figurines from Bitalemi, Gela (Bertesago 2009, p. 60 note 43, pl. III, fig. 10; cfr. the articles by M. Albertocchi and G. Pedrucci in this volume) and Kamarina (refer to the article by G. Pedrucci in this volume). Cfr. Hadzisteliou-Price 1978, pp. 30-31; Wise 2007, pp. 157-158.

Fig. 11. *Kourophoroi* with a child on the shoulder, from Idoumea (after Erlich 2019a, p. 262 fig. 7).

remained popular during the Hellenistic period, as evidenced by figurines from Kharayeb, where the pattern was applied to both female and male figures carrying a child in a precarious position[157]. As noted by Adi Erlich, «this iconography does not seem to reflect a scene of daily life, since the position compromises both the child's safety and the mother's stability. Indeed, the frontal pose suggests a hieratic performance. The pair probably depicts a mother and her child; however, it is not a suckling infant, […] but rather a child who is grown enough to be stable on the mother's shoulder»[158].

During the Persian period, women were depicted in musical performances, often associated with religious processions and festivals, and possibly linked to fertility symbolism. They typically played a frame-drum, either held flat against the body or supported by the left hand while being

[157] Chéhab 1951-1952, pp. 33-34; 1953-1954, pls. XXXIII.1 (in the variant depicting a woman kissing a child), XXXIV.2-3.
[158] Erlich 2014, p. 52.

struck with the right. This depiction is observed on artefacts found in Tripoli[159], Sidon (in both necropolis and urban areas)[160] and Kharayeb (cult place)[161].

A notable feature of this chronological phase is the prevalence of numerous male and female figurines reflecting Greek influence. This influence is evident in their garments (peplos or chiton and *himation*), hairstyles, headdresses (*stephane*, *polos*) and postures[162]. These statuettes were typically solid and produced using single moulds, either imported or derived from original Hellenic models through the *surmoulage* technique[163] (Fig. 12). Greek-style female figurines were predominantly found in cultic and funerary contexts, with sporadic distribution from Amrit[164] to Tel Ṣippor[165]

Fig. 12. Greek-style female figurines from: a-d. Kharayeb (adapted from Castiglione 2023, p. 290 fig. 2); e-f. Tel Ṣippor (after Negbi 1966, nn. 4-5). Composition by the author.

[159] Musée du Louvre, inv. AO 25947. Cfr. Heuzey 1923, p. 60 n. 195, pl. VI.4.
[160] For female terracotta figurines representing tambourine (*tympanon*) players from necropolises, see Contenau 1920, pp. 305-317. Similar items have been discovered at the Dakerman 55 Site, which features both Hellenistic and Iron Age II occupation layers, with numerous urban constructions (walls, foundations, stoves and wells) as well as tombs. This context was presented by S. Shrara at the conference *Les figurines de terre cuite hellénistiques et romaines d'origine libanaise*, held in Beirut (2019), with the proceedings forthcoming.
[161] For figurines holding a frame-drum or tambourine in the described positions, see Chéhab 1951-1952, p. 19; 1953-1954, pl. I.3-4; Oggiano 2015a, p. 515 fig. 7 (left); 2015b, p. 258 fig. 2 (left).
[162] Cfr. Gubel 1982, pp. 229-230; Nunn 2000, pp. 70-71.
[163] Cfr. Uhlenbrock 2016, pp. 6-8; Bolognani 2022.
[164] Culican 1969, pp. 39-40.
[165] The figurines from Tel Ṣippor have their arms positioned along the body. Cfr. Culican 1969, pp. 39-40; Negbi 1964; 1966.

(cult places), as well as in Beirut (necropolis)[166], Bostan esh-Sheikh (cult place)[167], Sidon (necropolis and urban areas)[168], Kharayeb (cult place)[169], Tyre[170], and Tel Dor (cult place)[171].

Some statuettes depict well-dressed young maidens, often standing with their arms at their sides, possibly representing elegant and educated unmarried girls (Fig. 12.a-c, e-f). Others feature outstretched arms, reminiscent of praying figurines or the so-called ring-dancers[172] found in Greek and Cypriot contexts (Figs. 12.d, 13, 14). Due to their fragmentary condition and the absence of bases, determining their original form with certainty is challenging. Two possible reconstructions are proposed: either a single base shared by all the standing figures or individual bases for each figurine. In the latter scenario, each statuette may represent an abbreviated and symbolic allusion to choral dances performed during pre-marriage rituals, possibly arranged by worshippers in a linear or circular formation. Regardless of the reconstruction, these figurines likely aimed to visualize, through their imagery, young women participating in or referencing prenuptial practices. Extending this speculation, they might also be imagined as individual dancers holding torches in both hands, as suggested by some Punic parallels[173].

2.3.2. Figurines of Children

Statuettes depicting children, which were not prominent in the Late Iron Age, emerged as a significant iconographic innovation during the Persian period. The types known as "temple boys" and "temple girls" likely originated in Egypt and became widespread in Cyprus, where both stone and clay examples have been discovered[174]. These figures, varying in interpretation and depiction,

[166] These figurines were found in the Saifi 477 necropolis in Beirut. This context was presented by J. Chanteau and J. Nassar at the conference *Les figurines de terre cuite hellénistiques et romaines d'origine libanaise*, held in Beirut (2019), with the proceedings forthcoming.

[167] Ganzmann – Van der Meijden – Stucky 1987, pp. 96-101, pl. 31.52-57; Nunn 2000, pp. 62-63 types 28.a and 28.c, pls. 31.103, 32.108.

[168] For Sidonian figurines with both outstretched arms and arms kept along the body, see Nunn 2000, p. 62 type 28a, pls. 30.101 (Musée du Louvre, inv. AO 1390), 31.102 (Musée du Louvre, inv. 1383), 33.106 (Musée du Louvre, inv. AO 1581), 33.107 (Musée du Louvre, inv. AO 21071). These figurines have been discovered in the necropolises of Ayaa and Helalieh (cfr. Contenau 1920, pp. 305-317), as well as at Dakerman 55 Site, which includes numerous urban constructions (walls, foundations, stoves and wells) and tombs. This context was presented by S. Shrara at the conference *Les figurines de terre cuite hellénistiques et romaines d'origine libanaise*, held in Beirut (2019), with the proceedings forthcoming.

[169] For figurines from Kharayeb with both outstretched arms and arms kept along the body, see Oggiano 2015a, pp. 508-510, 516-519; 2015b, pp. 241-242, 247-248, fig. 4; 2020, pp. 272-273; Castiglione 2021, p. 53. Furthermore, see a terracotta figurine displayed in the Musée National de Beyrouth.

[170] Tyrian context is undetermined (Bolognani 2022, p. 481 and note 80).

[171] Stern 2010, pp. 18-19, 71-79, 102-103.

[172] For the interpretation of the dancing gesture related to these terracottas, see Ganzmann – Van der Meijden – Stucky 1987, p. 101; Bolognani 2022, pp. 480-483; Castiglione forthcoming a.

[173] See Castiglione forthcoming a.

[174] For the type of the so-called "temple boy", see Hadzisteliou-Price 1969; Beer 1994; Hermary – Mertens 2013, pp. 201-212; Caneva – Delli Pizzi 2014; Wacławik 2017. Cfr. Nunn 2000, pp. 22-24; Lipiński 2003, pp. 304-305; López-Bertran 2018, p. 89, with previous bibliography; Le Meaux 2019, pp. 148-153; Erlich 2022, pp. 9-10; Hoffmann 2023, pp. 118-121. Terracotta figurines representing "temple boys" or "crouching boys" have also been found in Attica, Boeotia, Corinth, Megara, Olynthus, Cumae, Thasos, Claros, Lindos, Myrina, Smyrna, Alexandria, Cyrene, various centres of Magna Graecia, Olbia, Panticapaeum, Nymphaeum, Armenia, and the islands of Berezan

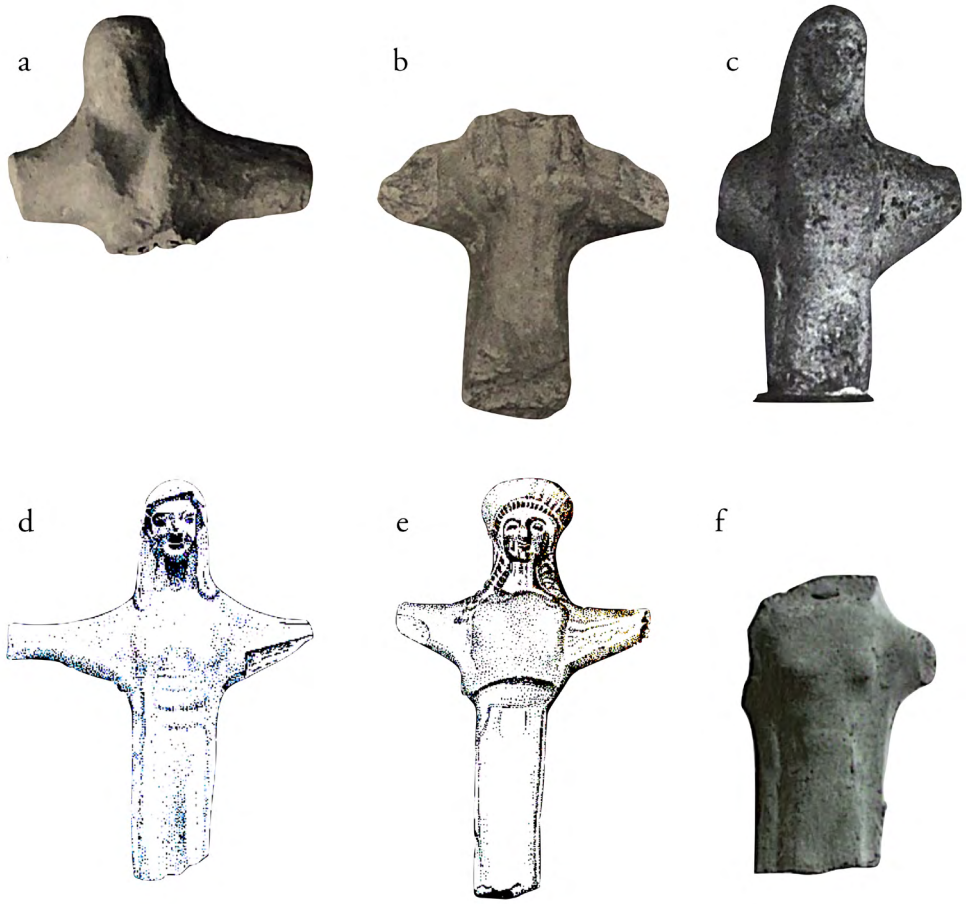

Fig. 13. Greek-style *korai* with outstretched arms from: a-b. Beirut (after Picaud 2015, p. 292 figs. 4-5); c. Bostan esh-Sheikh (after Ganzmann *et al.* 1987, pl. 31.53); d-e. Sidon (after Ganzmann *et al.* 1987, p. 98 figs. 1-2); f. Tel Dor (after Stern 2010, p. 103 pl. 13, fig. 21.8). Composition by the author.

generally portray seated children – primarily boys, though occasionally girls – in a standardized pose. The bent right leg is often interpreted as a sign that the child has not yet learned to walk[175]. The figures are typically either naked or dressed in a tunic and are frequently adorned with long necklaces or diagonal chains bearing small objects, often understood as amulets. Boys are sometimes depicted lifting their garments to expose their genitals, while holding an animal or a small round object, such as a loaf of bread or a ball.

In the Persian Levant, terracotta figurines exclusively depicted squatting male infants, though such representations were relatively rare. Notable examples include one from Amrit[176], two

and Levka (cfr. Margaryan 2015). For a "temple boy" from Tharros, see Pla Orquín 2017, pp. 322-323, fig. 416. For a statuette of a sleeping child in the "temple boy" pose from an unknown context in Sardinia, see Artizzu 2017.

[175] Cfr. López-Bertran 2018, p. 89.

[176] It is dated back to the 4th century BCE (Lembke 2004, pp. 35-36, 85, 154 n. 18, pl. 3.i).

Fig. 14. Greek-style *korai* with outstretched arms from Kharayeb (photos by Ida Oggiano © Kharayeb Archaeological Project). Composition by the author.

from Tel Dor[177], one from Tel Ṣippor[178] and another from Merhavia[179] (Fig. 15). In contrast, this iconography is more commonly represented in other forms of art, such as statues and statuettes made of limestone or imported marble[180]. Stone sculptures of squatting boys and male youths have been found at Amrit[181], likely at Byblos[182], at Tel Ṣippor[183] and especially at Bostan esh-Sheikh. At Bostan esh-Sheikh, marble statues dated to the 5th and 4th centuries BCE represent three distinct age groups: toddlers under one year old, children around three years old and those nearing puberty[184].

[177] Stern 1982, pp. 42-43, 49 fig. 2; 1995, pp. 442-443; 2001, p. 498 fig. III.29.
[178] Stern 1982, pp. 42-43 and note 43.
[179] Stern 1982, p. 43 note 44.
[180] In addition to the terracotta figurines from the Levant and Cyprus, marble and stone statuettes of "temple boys" have been discovered in Crete, Epidaurus, Olympia, Athens, Amphanes, Dion and Thessaloniki (cfr. Tzanavari 2012; Moustaka 2020).
[181] Lembke 2004, pp. 85-87, 194 nn. 393-399; pl. 53.d-i.
[182] Cfr. Dunand 1937, pl. XLIII.6035.
[183] Cfr. Negbi 1966, pp. 21-22, pl. XV; Stern 1982, pp. 42-43, and note 44.
[184] Stucky 1993, pp. 38-39.

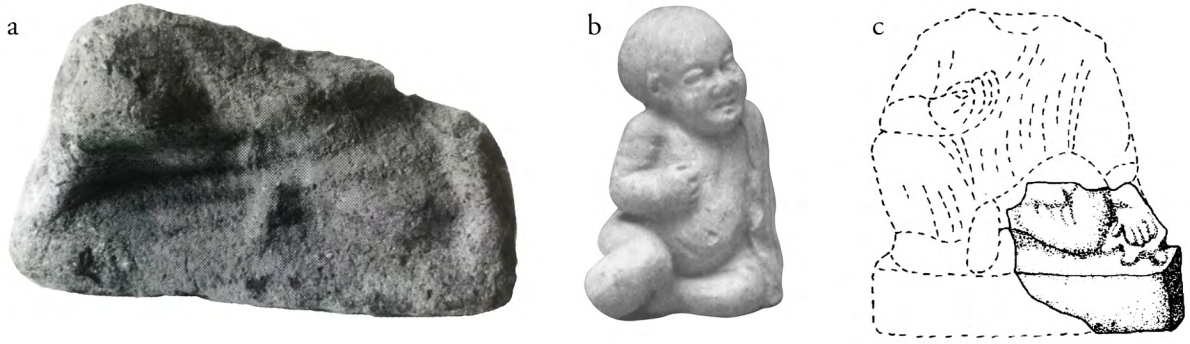

Fig. 15. "Temple boys" figurines from: a. Amrit (after Lembke 2004, pl. 3.i); b. Tel Dor (after Stern 2001, p. 498 fig. III.299); c. Tel Dor/Tel Ṣippor (after Stern 1982, p. 49 fig. 2). Composition by the author.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that sculptures of "temple girls" and maidens from Bostan esh-Sheikh primarily date to the Hellenistic period, corresponding with contemporaneous depictions found on terracotta figurines.

3. Hellenistic Terracotta Figurines (Late 4th-1st Century BCE)

Pre-Hellenistic evidence of figurines depicting women and children was confined to limited areas of meaning, but during the Hellenistic period (late 4th-1st century BCE), a significant shift occurred both technologically and iconographically. This change provides a more nuanced understanding of the economy, society and culture in the Levant.

In terms of production, the use of double moulds became widespread; these moulds were typically imported from Mediterranean centres and then locally copied, contributing to the apparent homogeneity of typologies and iconographies throughout the Mediterranean. Locally produced terracottas were manufactured in major centres along the Levantine coast, particularly in Tyre and Sidon[185].

Since a complete corpus of figurines from the Hellenistic Levant is not yet available and many retrieval sites lack clear stratigraphy, it is difficult to fully understand the context or examine the complete assemblage of figurines. Therefore, it seemed useful for our study to analyse the cult place of Kharayeb, located in the hinterland of Tyre[186], along with the terracottas discovered in its *favissa* and paved courtyard (Fig. 16). This site represents a noteworthy case study from qualitative, quantitative and interpretive perspectives.

[185] See Castiglione forthcoming c.
[186] For the publication of the excavations at the sanctuary, see Chéhab 1951-1952; 1953-1954; Kaoukabani 1973; Oggiano *et al.* 2016.

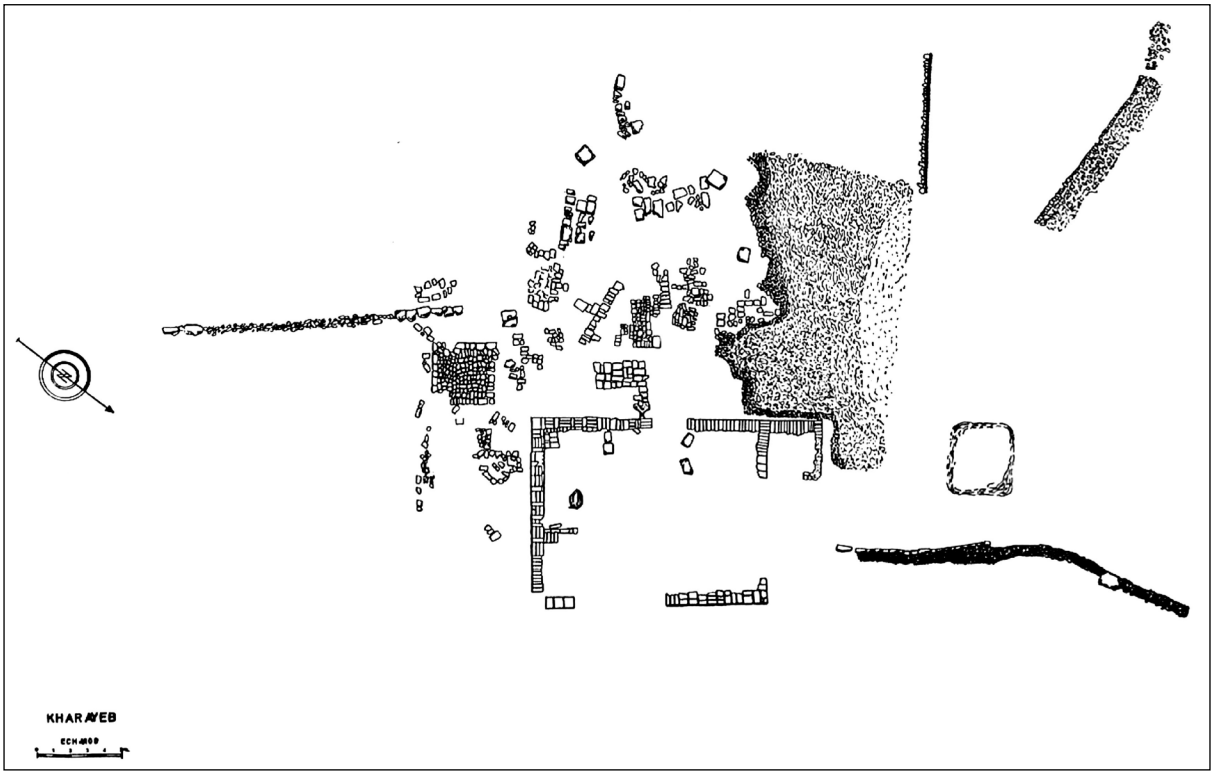

Fig. 16. Plan of the sanctuary at Kharayeb (after Kaoukabani 1973, p. 59).

First, from a technological standpoint, it is important to note that many statuettes from Kharayeb present fabrics, manufacturing techniques, types and iconographies similar to those found in other Levantine religious contexts, such as Jal el-Bahr, Borj Chemali, Tel Anafa, Umm el-ʿAmed, Akko, Tel Dor, Makmish and Tel Ṣippor[187]. These findings suggest that the figurines discovered in these contexts were likely produced in the same workshop or in a different atelier using similar moulds. Moreover, petrographic and PIXE analyses of figurines and pottery from Kharayeb and Tyre[188], along with petrographic analyses of figurines from Sidon and Tel Kedesh, and of miniature pottery from Mizpe Yammim[189], suggest that these workshops were probably located in Tyre or its hinterland.

From an iconographic and typological perspective, it is important to note that the statuettes from Kharayeb, particularly those depicting women and children, exhibit features, types and imagery that are also well known at other sites across the Mediterranean and in various Levantine centres. However, conducting a quantitative or contextual analysis of these parallels is not always feasible.

[187] For these similarities, see Castiglione forthcoming c.
[188] For these analyses, see Roumié *et al.* 2019; Oggiano – Castiglione 2023; Oggiano – Boschian – Roumié forthcoming.
[189] For these petrographic similarities, see Castiglione forthcoming c.

Moreover, from the quantitative viewpoint, the percentages of terracotta figurines depicting women and children in Kharayeb were considerably higher compared to other cult places and Levantine contexts. Specifically, among the Hellenistic fragments, female statuettes accounted for at least 23%, while figurines of boys and girls comprised at least 35%. The high number of items, along with the diversity of their postures and activities – popular and widespread across other Levantine and Mediterranean assemblages[190] – provides a broad framework for assessing geographic and cultural trends in the Levant, as well as offering a wide range of iconographic choices and chronological comparisons that help contextualize more ambiguous cases.

Finally, from an interpretive perspective related to the specific cult, rituals or deity (or deities) worshipped – which undoubtedly influenced votive dedicatory practices – the entire corpus from Kharayeb appears to confirm the flexible nature of polytheism and the polyvalence of one or more gods. These divine figures likely shared spheres of influence connected to human fertility, healing, motherhood, childhood and puberty[191]. Given that these extensive prerogatives addressed collective needs common to many ancient societies, they were widespread throughout the Hellenistic Levant and frequently appeared in many cult places, as suggested by the votive offerings, inscriptions, and architectural and decorative features.

For all these reasons, the coroplastic assemblage found in Kharayeb can be considered a significant benchmark for broader analyses of Hellenistic figurines in the Levant.

3.1. *Female Figurines*

Some female terracottas from Kharayeb have close parallels with figurines from other Levantine sites, depicting well-dressed women often fully draped in a mantle, with their heads covered by a *himation* – a garment associated with special occasions and typically worn by older or married women[192]. Other figurines, such as those from Tanagra[193], represent a matronly figure holding a fan[194], dressed in a tunic and wearing a cloak as a veil when outdoors[195]. In cases where women did not cover their heads with the *himation*, a variety of hairstyles can be observed, allowing us to trace the chronological evolution of hair fashion, similar to trends in Greece, Asia Minor and Samos: from the Knidian coiffure, with or without a *stephane*, to hairstyles featuring the *lampadion* or the melon coiffure, with or without[196] a wreath (Fig. 17).

[190] For some iconographies related to women and children depicted on Hellenistic figurines from Kharayeb, widespread in the Levant and the wider Mediterranean world, see Castiglione 2019; 2020a; 2020b; 2022; forthcoming b.
[191] Cfr. Castiglione 2020b; 2022.
[192] See Castiglione 2020a and some items from Kharayeb stored in the Musée National de Beyrouth (e.g., inv. 111237 and 95305, © Kharayeb Archaeological Project).
[193] See the numerous figurines from Boeotia (Tanagra) dated between the late 4th and the early 3rd century BCE (Besques 1971-1972, pp. 21-27, pl. 17; 1994, pp. 72-73, 75).
[194] See Castiglione 2020a and some items from Kharayeb stored in the Musée National de Beyrouth (e.g. inv. 112103 and 95459, © Kharayeb Archaeological Project).
[195] Cfr. Hasselin Rous – Yalçin 2018.
[196] Dating from 200-150 BCE.

Fig. 17. Hellenistic female figurines from Kharayeb (adapted from Castiglione 2020a, p. 22 fig. 8.a-b).

These findings on garments and hairstyles raise the debated question concerning the inhabitants of the Hellenistic Levant: did they actually wear these "foreign" clothes, possibly during religious festivals? Did they aspire to possess such attire, or were they merely depicted through idealized, standardized and non-realistic images, often derived from imported moulds[197]?

Many Hellenistic figurines also depict women engaged in rituals and religious performances, as documented in earlier periods. Some statuettes show women dancing, fully veiled to accentuate movement and speed[198], while others portray them playing musical instruments such as the lyre, *kythara*, trigon, tambourine (*tympanon*), xylophone or harp[199] (Fig. 18).

Other terracotta figurines of maidens and women are depicted carrying baskets[200] and holding jugs, *olpai* or *hydriai*[201], possibly containing offerings or food and liquids for personal and collective consumption during festival days[202] (Fig. 19). In the Greek world, the role of the

[197] See Castiglione 2020a.
[198] See, for example, Chéhab 1951-1952, p. 35 nn. a-e; 1953-1954, pls. XXXVI.1-2, XCVIII.2. Cfr. Castiglione 2019, pp. 364-366.
[199] See, for example, Chéhab 1951-1952, pp. 37-39; 1953-1954, pls. XL.1,3, XLI.1,3, XLII, XLIII, XLIV.1-2, and some items from Kharayeb stored in the Musée National de Beyrouth, (e.g. inv. 112105 and 95120, © Kharayeb Archaeological Project). Similar terracottas were found in Cyprus (Amathous, Salamis) Akko and Maresha (see Erlich 2019b, pp. 376-377).
[200] See Chéhab 1951-1952, p. 56; 1953-1954, pl. LXVI.1, and some items from Kharayeb stored in the Musée National de Beyrouth (e.g. inv. 111825, 114245 and 114244, © Kharayeb Archaeological Project).
[201] See Chéhab 1951-1952, pp. 56-57; 1953-1954, pls. XCVIII.3-4, XCIX.1-2, XCIX.4.
[202] For these types from Kharayeb, see, most recently, Castiglione 2020a; 2020b, pp. 99-100; forthcoming b.

Fig. 18. Hellenistic female dancers and musicians from Kharayeb (a, d. photos by Ida Oggiano © Kharayeb Archaeological Project; b-c. after Castiglione 2020a, pp. 20, 22 figs. 6, 8.a; e. after Castiglione 2020b, p. 126 fig. 11). Composition by the author.

kanephoros – a basket-bearer – was traditionally associated with the "ideal maiden" of the city, and the honour of fulfilling this ritual role was of great importance to the entire family[203]. Similarly, the *hydrophoros* type, prevalent during the Classical and Hellenistic periods, was found in many cult places, particularly in the Levant and Asia Minor[204], and its association with both human and natural fertility is undeniable. These figurines likely referenced the ritual bathing of brides and religious practices initially connected with general female and kourotrophic cults, later associated with the worship of Demeter, Kore or other deities[205]. Additionally, they may have reflected the

[203] Cfr. Hoffmann 2023, p. 163.

[204] On the diffusion of *hydrophoroi* around the Mediterranean (i.e. Tegea, Corinth, Boeotia – Thebes and Orchomenos, Kos, Samos, Iasos, Caria, Palestine, Cyprus, Egypt, Crete), see Erlich – Kloner 2008, p. 34; Erlich 2019b, pp. 376-377; Kozlowski 2015. For specific sites: Tegea (Karapanagiotou – Leventi 2015); Corinth (Merker 2000, pp. 38-42 [Classical period], p. 129 [Hellenistic period], H49 pl. 27); Iasos (Berti 2015); Labraunda, Caria (Karlsson 2015); Palestine, with references to Cyprus and Egypt (Erlich – Kloner 2008, p. 34, nn. 88-89, pl. 17; Erlich 2016); Alexandria (Kassab Tezgör 2007, p. 194 n. 260, pl. 78c). For female figurines holding *hydriai* and male amphora bearers from Crete, see Besques 1971-1972, pp. 62, pl. 77b, 63, pl. 80d.

[205] The *hydrophoroi* from Thebes (Archaeological Museum of Thebes), Kos (Archaeological Museum of Kos) and Samos (Archaeological Museum of Pythagorion) were found in sanctuaries dedicated to Demeter. Those from Orchomenos,

Fig. 19. *Hydrophoroi* from Kharayeb (a. photo by Ida Oggiano © Kharayeb Archaeological Project; b-d. adapted from Castiglione 2020a, p. 23 fig. 11). Composition by the author.

use of water in cult rituals related to purification or illustrated daily activities performed by local women, symbolizing their status as maidens or citizens' wives. Thus, although these Greek images generally represent activities and offerings within sanctuaries, their presence and use in Kharayeb might be tied to everyday practices and rituals that are otherwise unattested.

Kourotrophoi and *kourophoroi* types were widespread in assemblages from Kharayeb[206], Tel Dor, Maresha[207] and Cyprus. These figurines depict women breastfeeding, nursing, cradling, kissing or carrying a child on their left arm – closer to the heart – while keeping their right hand free for other tasks (Fig. 20.a). Two important points arise concerning these types: on the one hand, *kourotrophoi* may represent both mothers and wet-nurses, who perhaps dedicated these statuettes in hopes of strengthening the maternal bond through breastfeeding[208]. The presence of kourotrophic

also displayed in the Archaeological Museum of Thebes, were votive offerings in the sanctuary of the "Chthonic Deities". All these materials are not yet published.

[206] See Chéhab 1951-1952, pp. 32-34; 1953-1954, pls. XXXII-XXXIII, XXXIV.4 (female figurines), XXXIV.1-3 (male figurines). See, also, some items stored in the Musée National de Beyrouth (for example inv. 95446, 95319, 95282, 95276, 112091, 111795, 111934, 95209, 95242, 114496, 106985, 95446, 114284, 114298 and 95364, © Kharayeb Archaeological Project).

[207] See Erlich 2019b, p. 377.

[208] Cfr. Thibaut 2022, in particular p. 920. On wet-nurses and the representation of lactating women in Greek medical texts from the 2nd century BCE to the 7th century CE, see Constantinou – Skouroumouni-Stavrinou 2024b.

imagery in cult places suggests a shared belief in divine protection for the young. On the other hand, the *kourophoroi* found in Kharayeb feature both female and male figures[209], possibly reflecting shared parental responsibilities. Some figurines even depict a parent in a frontal pose holding an older child on their shoulders or in an awkward position – seated on the left shoulder, leaning on the parent's head, with the child's legs held by the parent's left arm[210] (Fig. 21).

Most *kourophoroi* depicted a woman, likely a mother or caregiver, and a child, who is presented frontally and directly engages the viewers, almost as if speaking to them. As with the female figurines of the "Mantle Dancer" type, the garments of this group play a key role in creating a sense of movement and emotion. The mantle draped over the heads and bodies of both the woman and the child emphasizes their close physical, psychological and emotional bond, which is visually reinforced by the shared cloak (Fig. 20.a).

Finally, a few rarer figurines depict a mother holding a baby in her left arm while carrying writing tablets in a bag with her right hand[211] (Fig. 20.b). The assemblage from Kharayeb includes

Fig. 20. Female *kourotrophoi* and *kourophoroi* from Kharayeb (photos by Ida Oggiano © Kharayeb Archaeological Project). Composition by the author.

[209] Chéhab 1951-1952, pp. 32-34; 1953-1954, pls. XXXII.1-2,4, XXXIII.1-3, XXXIV.
[210] Chéhab 1951-1952, pp. 33-34; 1953-1954, pls. XXXIII.1 (in the variant of woman kissing a child), XXXIV.1-3. Cfr. § 2.3.1.
[211] Chéhab 1951-1952, p. 32 n. b (indicated, incorrectly, as pl. XXXIII.2); 1953-1954, pl. XXXII.2.

Fig. 21. Male *kourophoroi* with a child on their shoulders from Kharayeb (after Chéhab 1953-1954, pl. XXXIV.1-3).

evidence of female pupils and educated maidens who could read[212], suggesting that these terracottas may provide additional insight into female education in this part of the Levant. These images could symbolize the practice of storytelling to children or reflect the daily tasks of women, offering valuable information about their role as working mothers.

3.2. *Figurines of Children*

During pre-Hellenistic periods, terracotta figurines of children in the Levant were scarce and exclusively depicted boys. However, in the Hellenistic period, there was a notable increase in both the quantity and diversity of these representations. Children and youths began to appear alongside adults as social actors, with distinct roles and their own spheres of activity within contemporary communities.

The iconographic types found in Kharayeb reflect various aspects of children's lives, customs and actions. These statuettes can be divided into three age groups – infants, young children and

[212] For a deeper analysis of these types, see Castiglione 2020a; 2020b.

older youngsters – based on the characteristics of their appearance (such as body proportions, clothing, hairstyles and postures) and the types of actions they performed[213].

The first group, infants, is represented by numerous male and female figurines of children (aged 2-4) playing with their favourite pets: girls and boys with birds, and boys with dogs[214] (Fig. 22).

Fig. 22. Hellenistic terracotta figurines from Kharayeb, depicting children with animals (photos by Ida Oggiano © Kharayeb Archaeological Project). Composition by the author.

The second group consists of young children engaged in activities likely related to the transitional phase from childhood to adolescence[215]. For example, some male figurines are shown protecting a bunch of grapes from a bird, metaphorically alluding to the learning of rules and the abandonment of wild instincts as they mature, unlike the animals stealing the grapes. Additionally, boys holding a ball in their right hand likely represent play activities typical of children aged 5-8 or

[213] See Castiglione 2020b. Cfr. Beaumont 2003, pp. 75-77.
[214] For more details, see Castiglione 2020b, pp. 101-103.
[215] For more details, see Castiglione 2020b, pp. 103-106.

could reference the offering of balls in sanctuaries, as described in an epigram by Leonidas of Taras (c. 300-250 BCE): «To Hermes Philocles here hands up these toys of his boyhood: his noiseless ball, this lively boxwood rattle, his knucklebones he had such a mania for, and his spinning-top»[216] (Fig. 23).

Fig. 23. Hellenistic terracotta figurines from Kharayeb, representing children holding a bunch of grapes away from a bird or holding a ball (adapted from Castiglione 2020b, pp. 123-124 figs. 7, 9). Composition by the author.

The final age group includes older youngsters, with male figurines training a Maltese dog with a ball. Boys are often shown wearing tunics, sometimes with a stole, wrapped in a short mantle or voluminous *himation*, while girls are dressed in a long chiton and *himation* (Fig. 24). Both boys and girls imitate adults and participate in the social life of the sanctuary. As in Greek contexts, they likely had active roles in religious rites and were involved in various activities, including rituals and offerings[217]. Some boys wore stoles like cult attendants[218], while others carried lanterns[219], possibly for evening rituals, or offered animals (e.g., *kriophoroi*) and fruit, especially pomes, which could metaphorically symbolize emotions, relationships and love affairs[220] (Fig. 25).

[216] *The Greek Anthology*, 6, 309 (transl. W.R. Paton, Loeb). Cfr. Dasen 2013b, p. 9. In the case of girls, they generally dedicated their toys (e.g., dolls, tambourines and balls) to the gods before marriage, typically around the age of fourteen or fifteen, as noted in *The Greek Anthology*, 6, 280. See also Neils 2003, p. 152.
[217] Cfr. Bobou 2021 for an exploration of the various kinds and degrees of participation of Greek children in Hellenistic religion.
[218] Cfr. Oggiano 2013.
[219] See Chéhab 1951-1952, p. 57; 1953-1954, pl. LXVIII.3-4; Kaoukabani 1973, p. 45, pl. V fig. 4, and some items stored in the Musée National de Beyrouth (e.g. inv. 111767, 95240 and 95233, © Kharayeb Archaeological Project).
[220] See Dasen 2016; 2018. Cfr. *The Greek Anthology*, 5, 80 and 5, 214.

Fig. 24. Hellenistic terracotta figurines from Kharayeb, depicting a girl in a long chiton, a boy in a tunic and stole, and young people training a Maltese dog (adapted from Castiglione 2020a, pp. 23-24, figs. 10, 12). Composition by the author.

Fig. 25. Hellenistic terracotta figurines from Kharayeb, depicting children with a stole, lantern, animals and fruit offerings (a, c. adapted from Castiglione 2020a, pp. 22-23 figs. 9-10; b, d-e. photos by Ida Oggiano © Kharayeb Archaeological Project). Composition by the author.

Finally, boys and girls are depicted engaging in various activities related to music, theatre, sports and schooling, reflecting their journey process from the carefree world of play to their eventual incorporation into adult society.

It is important to note that, unlike earlier periods, the Hellenistic figurines extensively represented the female gender. Little girls are shown playing with birds, performing music, dancing and making offerings. Education, while available for both boys and girls, displayed significant gender differences. Although girls in Kharayeb and its surrounding areas learned to read, like their male peers, the numerous statuettes of pupils suggest that girls were not taught to write, in contrast to boys (Fig. 26)[221].

Fig. 26. Hellenistic terracotta figurines from Kharayeb, depicting children engaged in educational activities (a. photos by Ida Oggiano © Kharayeb Archaeological Project; b. adapted from Castiglione 2020a, pp. 24, 27 figs. 13, 16). Composition by the author.

4. Concluding Remarks

Between the Late Iron Age and the Hellenistic period, Levantine terracotta figurines underwent significant technological innovations in terms of manufacturing and production. At the same time, many of these figurines participated in a long and rich iconographic continuum. This is particularly evident in the case of statuettes depicting women engaged in rituals involving music, dance and offerings, as well as those holding fans or portrayed as *kourophoroi* and *kourotrophoi*, the nurturing caregivers of the young.

[221] For more details on these terracotta figurines, including their discussion and some parallels, see Castiglione 2020b, pp. 106-109. On the wider topic of ancient education, see Zalateo 1975; Pomeroy 1977; Cavallo 1995; Morgan 1998; Cavallo 2009; Marrou – Degiovanni 2016; Del Corso 2022.

In the pre-Hellenistic phases, various aspects of fertility and motherhood were represented, including pregnancy as an expression of fertility, concerns over successful deliveries, the survival of newborns and breastfeeding. Fertility, pregnancy, birth and nursing were regarded as crucial yet risky activities for both mothers and children. This perspective is reflected in the proposed interpretations of two particular statuettes: a bell-shaped female terracotta from Sarepta, which appears to hold a possible embryo or foetus in her arms, probably symbolizing hope for a positive outcome; and a pregnant woman figurine from Sidon, with a parallel found in Kharayeb, which may suggest the incorrect positioning of the unborn child and the risk of a breech delivery.

To gain a deeper understanding of the importance and anxieties surrounding pregnancy and childbirth – especially in relation to the high incidence of maternal mortality – it is useful to consider archaeological evidence from Phoenician and Punic funerary contexts. In these contexts, pregnant women or those who died in childbirth were often subject to mourning rituals and specific burial practices[222]. For instance, in some Phoenician and Punic cemeteries, the graves of pregnant women were located in areas populated almost exclusively by children's graves, or they were marked by particular ritual gestures, such as the isolation, purification or containment of the spirit of the body within the tomb[223]. These practices suggest that Levantine communities paid particular attention to these stages of female life, and it is unsurprising that terracotta figurines alluding to these concerns were dedicated in religious spaces.

Furthermore, it is notable that the many figurines of female drummers seem to be associated with sexual fertility, a crucial element in the process of procreation[224].

During these chronological phases, the centrality of motherhood within the semantic framework of fertility was evident, as it was one of the primary female roles in both domestic and communal economies. Notably, depictions of pregnant women were far less common in the contemporaneous Hellenic world[225] than in the Levant and Cyprus. In the Archaic period, only four probable examples of pregnant figurines are known: one from the sacred area of Penteskouphia near Corinth[226], another from the *Heraion* of Argos[227], two from the sanctuary of Zeus *Messapeus* at Tsakona in Lakonia[228], and a final one from Lato in Crete[229]. The Greek examples are generally

[222] See Delgado Hervás – Rivera-Hernández 2018. Cfr. Piga *et al.* 2020 with previous bibliography. In addition, for further discussion on the attention given to children in relation to funerary practices in the Phoenician and Punic world, see Rivera-Hernández 2024.

[223] For the cases of Achziv, Monte Sirai and Tuvixeddu (Sardinia), Puig des Molins (Ibiza), Las Chorreras (Andalusia), Quinta do Estácio 6 and Vinhas das Caliças (Portugal), see Delgado Hervás – Rivera-Hernández 2018, pp. 60-65; cfr. Rivera-Hernández 2024.

[224] Paz 2007, p. 97.

[225] For the images of pregnancy in the Greek world, analysed with the literary sources on reproduction, see Ducaté-Paarmann 2005; cfr. Lee 2012. For the representation of pregnancy in Greek terracotta figurines, see Albertocchi 2018.

[226] Cfr. Wise 2007, pp. 134-136 fig. 19, 279 n. 2.30 (late 6th/early 5th century BCE); Albertocchi 2018, pp. 59-60. Unfortunately, two other figurines from Corinth have not been published (Wise 2007, pp. 136-137).

[227] Cfr. Wise 2007, pp. 130-131, 277 n. 2.22; Albertocchi 2018, pp. 59-60.

[228] Cfr. Wise 2007, pp. 130-131 fig. 13, 280 n. 2.34; Albertocchi 2018, pp. 59-60.

[229] Wise 2007, pp. 134-135, 277-278 n. 2.23 (3rd quarter of the 7th century BCE). Other figurines representing pregnant women were found in Crete: two handmade statuettes dated back to the Protogeometric or Geometric

dated later than the Levantine items, with some emerging in the Classical period and mostly in the Hellenistic period: a terracotta from Athens[230], two figurines from the cult place of Artemis *Laphria* at Kalydon[231], two from Kirrha[232], three possible examples from the sanctuary of Athena Cranaia at Elatea[233], and one each from Boeotia[234] and Tanagra[235]. Other examples include one figurine from the cave of the Nymphs at Pitsa[236], two from the *Artemision* of Thasos[237], one from Delos[238], several from Smyrna[239], three from Myrina[240], and some from the urban temple of Hera and the *Heraion* at the Foce del Sele in *Paestum*[241], as well as one from the sacred area in the Carrubbazza locality of Gela[242].

A noteworthy example, both iconographically and chronologically, is a set of mould-made terracotta figurines from a cave sanctuary at Yumaklar/Arpalık Tepe (southern Pisidia), dated to the late 5th century (440-420 BCE). These statuettes, depicting seated women with their hands resting on their knees and displaying various stages of pregnancy, closely resemble the so-called *dea Tyria gravida* type, confirming the strong coroplastic connections between the Levant and Asia Minor. However, unlike Levantine figurines, these examples are dressed in long *himatia*, covering their heads, backs and sides, while leaving their front exposed[243].

According to Marina Albertocchi[244], the scarcity of Greek documentation from the Archaic and Classical periods is linked to the confinement of pregnancy to the private sphere or marginal areas, such as caves, due to the risks associated with that condition. Women would only return to frequenting sanctuaries after the birth of their offspring, once they had passed through the uncertain and perilous phase of childbirth. In contrast, the widespread presence of figurines depicting pregnant

period (Wise 2007, pp. 134-137 figs. 21-22, 281 n. 2.35), one dated to the Geometric period from the rural "Peak Shrine" at Kavousi (cfr. Wise 2007, pp. 134-135 fig. 18, 278 n. 2.24; Kanta 2022a) and numerous handmade figurines from the Geometric/Archaic period from the Inatos Cave of *Eileithyia*, at Tsoutsouros (cfr. Wise 2007, pp. 134-137 fig. 20, 280 n. 2.33; Kanta 2022a; 2022b, pp. 100-101, 106-107).

230 Wise 2007, pp. 129 fig. 10, 276 n. 2.17.

231 Ducaté-Paarmann 2005, p. 44 fig. 12; cfr. Albertocchi 2018, p. 62.

232 Cfr. Huysecom-Haxhi 2018 and her article in this volume. Cfr. Albertocchi 2018, p. 62, discussing figurines from a sanctuary possibly dedicated to the Delphic triad (5th century BCE?).

233 Wise 2007, pp. 129-130, 276-277 nn. 2.18-20 (probably 5th-4th century BCE).

234 Ducaté-Paarmann 2005, p. 44 fig. 13.

235 Musée du Louvre, inv. CA 473 (first quarter of the 3rd century BCE, probably from a funerary context); cfr. Albertocchi 2018, p. 62.

236 Ducaté-Paarmann 2005, p. 44 fig. 11; cfr. Wise 2007, pp. 134-135, 137 fig. 23, 279 n. 2.28; Albertocchi 2018, p. 62.

237 Albertocchi 2018, p. 62.

238 Wise 2007, pp. 130 fig. 11, 276 n. 2.16 (2nd-1st century BCE).

239 See, for example, Musée du Louvre, inv. CA 5148 (2nd-1st century BCE ; cfr. Wise 2007, pp. 131 fig. 14, 279-280 n. 2.31). Cfr. Ducaté-Paarmann 2005, pp. 44-45; Wise 2007, pp. 128-129 fig. 9, 277 n. 2.21 (Hellenistic period), 130-131, 280 n. 2.32 (late Hellenistic period); Albertocchi 2018, pp. 62-63 (items dated back to the late Hellenistic period).

240 Cfr. Ducaté-Paarmann 2005, pp. 45-46, 49; Wise 2007, pp. 132-133 fig. 16, 278-279 n. 2.27 (1st century BCE); Albertocchi 2018, p. 63.

241 Miller Ammerman 2007, p. 143 and note 45; cfr. Albertocchi 2018, p. 62 (items dated back to the Hellenistic period).

242 See Parisi 2017, pp. 91-92 (the material found in the votive deposit dates from the mid-6th century to the mid-4th century BCE).

243 See Işin 2015, pp. 561-562, 565-566 nn. 18-20, 569-570 figs. 18-20.

244 Albertocchi 2018.

women in Levantine cult places suggests that there were no hygienic or religious restrictions preventing pregnant women from accessing sanctuaries. They were not excluded from sacred festivals and rituals, unless one imagines that the terracotta figurines were offered on their behalf by other family members. Even in such a case, however, the strikingly high number of attestations highlights the evident public and communal significance of pregnancy.

Shifting our focus to breastfeeding, it was, and still is, a crucial activity, as breast milk is a natural, free and renewable source of nutrition that improves the survival, health and development of children, strengthens mother-child relationships and contributes to human capital development[245]. In the past, as today, breastfeeding was a delicate aspect of motherhood. Mothers' concerns, fears and hopes were likely linked to successful lactation – either through their own milk or with the help of a wet-nurse – and the quality of the milk itself, both critical to the survival and growth of the newborn.

To better contextualize the presence of breastfeeding figurines in the Levant from the Late Iron Age onwards, it is helpful to compare them with those from the Greek world. Before the 5th century BCE, few images of breastfeeding women exist in Hellenic contexts, despite the importance of this activity. For example, in ancient Attica, the absence of breastfeeding depictions has been attributed to the fact that this emotional activity did not align with the normative image of the ideal wife. Instead, breastfeeding scenes are more commonly found in regions less influenced by this ideology, such as northern Greece (Thessaly), Etruria, southern Italy and Sicily during the Classical period, and Hellenistic Kos and Kalymnos. Moreover, until the Hellenistic period, Greek representations of the *kourotrophos* type mainly depicted goddesses like Aphrodite, Cybele and Hera[246].

In light of this perspective, the more frequent appearance of this iconography in the Levant – where it depicted mortal women, even during pre-Hellenistic periods – can be seen as evidence that common people in these societies were able to openly express emotions and intimate responsibilities. While Greek religious traditions emphasized goddesses associated with various stages of a woman's life (from childhood to marriage and beyond), in the pre-Hellenistic periods, Levantine artists and craftspeople depicted selected stages related to practical human concerns, as they were more focused on daily necessities.

Moreover, in pre-Hellenistic periods, the social role of Levantine women was predominantly linked to procreation and motherhood, with much of their individual identity remaining modest and hidden. However, there were a few exceptions in which women's social and public self-presentation was highlighted, as seen in figurines holding a fan or mirror, participating in music and dance rituals, or performing offerings in religious contexts.

During the pre-Persian phases, children were not depicted as individuals but were instead indirectly referenced through key transitions in women's lives, which were fundamental for ensuring societal continuity. A distinct focus on childhood emerged during the Persian period, particularly

[245] See, most recently, Constantinou – Skouroumouni-Stavrinou 2024a, in particular p. 2. For milk and children feeding, see, most recently, Jaeggi-Richoz 2024.
[246] Cfr. Dasen 2022; Gherchanoc 2022, p. 635; Thibaut 2022; Volokhine *et al.* 2022 for the divine figures.

in connection with rites marking the transformation from infancy to childhood. However, this attention to children seemed to be favoured mainly by an upper-middle segment of the population, as suggested by the scarcity of terracotta figurines depicting the so-called "temple boys", which were predominantly represented in stone sculpture.

In the Hellenistic period, women and children engaged more visibly with their communities. They presented themselves as well-dressed, educated individuals and participated in public rituals involving music, dance and offerings. The representation of women and children became more complex, reflecting a deeper political and socio-cultural transformation influenced by the Greek world. This shift was not only artistic but also reflected changes in social norms.

While fertility, motherhood and well-being of children remained important themes – expressed by typologies such as *hydrophoi*, *kourotrophoi* and *kourophoroi* – there was less emphasis on pregnancy, childbirth and early motherhood in votive terracottas. In earlier periods, a woman's social identity was often centered around her role in procreation, with children serving as public symbols of her success in this regard. However, the Hellenistic period saw a transfer of focus from the domestic sphere to public life, where women began to express their education and cultural knowledge, which they had gained both at home and through informal or formal schooling.

The increasing visibility of infants, children, and adolescents in terracotta figurines during the Hellenistic period highlights a growing interest in the various phases of childhood and adolescence. These stages, such as the transition from infancy to childhood and from childhood to adulthood, were important rites of passage, helping to socialize and integrate children into family and community life. While images of children had already appeared in stone sculpture during the Persian period, the Hellenistic period saw a significant expansion in the production and distribution of terracotta figurines, making them accessible to a broader range of social contexts.

From a wider Mediterranean perspective, it is important to note that in the Greek world, children and adolescents were increasingly viewed as independent individuals, gaining social recognition as distinct iconographic subjects from the Classical period onwards. During the Hellenistic period, they were often idealized and sentimentalized[247]. The Levant actively participated in this "pan-Mediterranean" diffusion of ideas but was also shaped by local traditions and social specificities. Thus, the presence of terracotta figurines depicting children and young people in the Hellenistic Levant reflected several factors: the broader social recognition of childhood and youth; the growing complexity and stratification of ancient society; and a widespread interest in the developmental stages of both male and female children. Initially, these representations may have been primarily associated with the elite, but as the Hellenistic ideals of childhood and youth permeated more layers of society, they became accessible even to lower classes. The increasing popularity of terracotta figurines as affordable artefacts played a key role in this cultural diffusion, contributing to the broader process of Mediterraneization that characterized the period.

[247] For their presence in Archaic and Classical Greek art, see Cohen – Rutter 2007 (*passim*); Beaumont 2012, pp. 15-42; Oakley 2013 (including references to the Hellenistic period); Beaumont 2021, particularly pp. 65-74.

Consequently, the attitudes of children and youngsters were diverse and differentiated based on their age. Young boys and girls shared certain attributes and gestures that associated them with play, often depicted with birds and dogs. As boys matured, they transitioned from childish objects and behaviours, adopting societal norms and becoming "good citizens" through physical exercise in *gymnasia* or informal open spaces. In contrast, girls were excluded from these activities, but they were depicted engaging in offerings of birds and participating in certain phases of education, such as music and dance. Around the age of seven, both boys and girls began formal schooling, but while girls were shown primarily focusing on reading, boys appeared to progress further in their education (Fig. 27).

Fig. 27. Summary table comparing the representations of children in Hellenistic terracotta figurines from Kharayeb with other types of sources. Created by the author.

In the Hellenistic period, significant stages in the life cycle of women, boys and girls were represented in images, particularly concerning marriage, birth and puberty. Figurines of mortal females and children engaged in daily activities or depicted in their prime or during transitional periods, served as artistic expressions of parental concerns, coming of age rituals, marriage ceremonies, and, more broadly, the awareness of mortality. As Maria Chidiroglou noted for terracotta statuettes from Eubea, «representations of female figures – particularly those that emphasize women's role in procreation, nurturing, and guarding familial ties – could carry a multitude of symbolic meanings. In a sense, female figurines […] functioned almost as ideograms for various stages of life, rites of passage, and religious ideas. Their types echo the vivid interest of the coroplasts and their clients in the theme of beautiful youth, a subject expressed in sculpture and coroplastic art»[248].

The prevalence of figurines depicting women and children in sanctuaries dedicated to a broad array of deities across the Mediterranean underscores the widespread appeal of themes such as fertility,

[248] Chidiroglou 2015, p. 100.

safe childbirth, upbringing and the transition into adulthood. These concerns were significant not only for the mothers but also for fathers, siblings, and grandparents – all potential dedicators of these terracottas. The continuation of the family line was valued for ensuring security, stability, and joy for all family members, not just the childbearer.

The case study of Kharayeb, which documents the presence of both female figurines and children's statuettes representing various stages of life within the same context, supports two hypotheses concerning sanctuaries with such coroplastic assemblages. The first assumption suggests that the divine referents in these sanctuaries were numerous and varied, depending on the age of the worshippers and the specific religious festivals and rituals performed there. For instance, this interpretation aligns with the sanctuary at Brauron, where the ritual of the little bears is well-documented, and a more complex cultic process involving female socialization and education appears to have occurred[249]. The second hypothesis posits that there may have been a few deities with overlapping functions, akin to "visiting gods", explaining the seemingly incongruent presence of images of one deity within a sanctuary dedicated to another god with similar functions[250].

In conclusion, terracotta figurine often miniaturized acts of piety by individuals or groups, such as family units, with the complete assemblage reflecting repeated ritual performances[251]. Many statuettes from the pre-Hellenistic and Hellenistic Levant primarily related to themes of female strength, particularly concerning life events like pregnancy and breastfeeding. As Rebecca Miller Ammerman observed regarding terracottas from *Paestum*, «the products of coroplastic workshops that express the anxieties and hopes of the local community with regard to the well-being of infants provide our most important source of information for understanding the role that ritual played in the lives of youngest members of the city-state»[252].

Moreover, as eudemonic objects, these figurines embodied personalized protective functions, and their abundant presence in sanctuaries not only reflects the popularity of these cult places[253] but also highlights the social cohesion and shared needs and desires of the community. They were deeply intertwined with religious practices and the significance and power of the deities worshipped. Taking all these factors into account, the need for individuals to seek favour and make vows, protect themselves and their families, and attract the benevolent powers of various deities – primarily linked to fertility, childbirth, maternal and infant health, and child development – was undoubtedly a major concern within Levantine communities, as is similarly evidenced in other ancient Mediterranean cultures[254].

[249] Cfr. Lippolis 2018.
[250] On "visiting gods", see Alroth 1989. Cfr. Klinger 2019 for protomes and masks in Corinth; Muller 2019 for terracotta figurines from Thasos.
[251] Cfr. Miller Ammerman 2007, pp. 132-135; Hoffmann 2023, pp. 153-166.
[252] Cfr. Miller Ammerman 2007, p. 148.
[253] Cfr. Salapata 2022.
[254] Cfr. Parker 2005, particularly pp. 387-451; de Hulster 2022, pp. 28, 40; Nunn 2022, pp. 110-113.

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WOMEN, MATERNITY, AND STATUS IN BRONZE AGE CYPRUS

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Abstract: This essay considers how terracotta depictions of women in general and *kourotrophoi* specifically might be understood in reference to women's status and the rise of patriarchy in Bronze Age Cyprus. The study ranges from the picrolite birthing pendants of the Middle and Late Chalcolithic (3500-2300 BCE) through to the Aegean-inspired Normal-faced figurines of Late Cypriot III (ca. 1200-1050) with special reference to the Scenic Compositions of the Early and Middle Bronze Ages (2300-1600). These data are correlated with archaeological evidence from domestic and funerary sites to consider matters of familial organization and notions of private property. The evidence suggests that the rise of familial units controlling household property had implications for the control of women, especially as urban and domestic architecture placed women's tasks more squarely within the house. Furthermore, the iconography reveals that women's identity as mothers went from generators to care-takers to being removed from the mortal then divine realms, deleting maternity from the iconographic record for centuries.

Keywords: Cyprus; Bronze Age; *kourotrophos*; Maternity; Patriarchy.

Maternity is a long-standing theme in the arts of ancient Cyprus, enduring, with interruptions, from the Chalcolithic to the Hellenic ages of the island. One of those interruptions occurred between the Late Chalcolithic and the Early Bronze Age, ca. 2300 BCE. This break is chronological, geographic, stylistic, and thematic. Before it, two maternal themes dominated southwestern Cyprus – the picrolite cruciform pendants that show a woman in the process of childbirth (Fig. 1)[1], and the terracottas from a cache from Kissonerga-*Mosphilia* (near Paphos) that depict stages of pregnancy and parturition[2]. In short: women in the process of parturition and generation.

After the gap, a new population from Anatolia[3] introduced a new repertoire of female[4] plank figurines (Fig. 2) – both individual or within scenic compositions – first appearing to the north of the island (e.g. Lapithos)[5]. Approximately 16% of these females were kourotrophic, shown holding an infant in a cradle board[6]. In short: child-care.

* Independent Scholar.
[1] a Campo 1994; Bolger 1996; 2003, p. 88; Budin 2011, p. 222; Serwint 2016, p. 402.
[2] Peltenburg – Betts 1991; Bolger 1992; 1996; Serwint 2016, p. 403.
[3] Webb – Frankel 1999.
[4] When sexual attributes are present, breasts are shown. No examples have phalloi.
[5] Bolger 1996, p. 396.
[6] Knapp – Meskell 1997, p. 196.

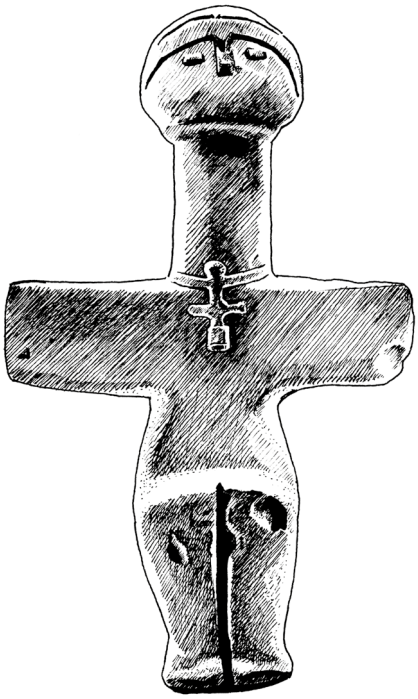


Fig. 1. Chalcolithic Cruciform Figurine from Yalia, Cyprus Museum, Nicosia, inv. n. 1934/III-2/2 (drawing by Paul C. Butler. Used with kind permission).

Fig. 2. Early Cypriot Plank Figurine. Cyprus Museum, Nicosia, inv. n. 1963/IV-20/12 (drawing by Paul C. Butler. Used with kind permission).

It is this latter depiction that was to endure in Cyprus to the end of the Bronze Age, evolving into the Bird-faced (Fig. 3) and then Normal-faced (Fig. 4) figurines before being replaced entirely by the so-called Goddess with Upraised Arms (Fig. 5)[7]. These final two images – both predicated on Aegean precedents – were devoid of kourotrophic imagery, marking the end of maternal iconography on the island until the 8th century BCE.

The change in iconographies at the dawn of the Bronze Age sparked a discussion about women's status in Cyprus at this time. Specifically: did the new portrayal of woman as care-taker (*mater*) – rather than creator (*genetrix*) – accompany a fall of status for women? The change correlates with the Secondary Products Revolution (SPR) where a possible sex-based division of labor led to men working outdoors in primary production (e.g. planting and harvesting grain, herding animals), and women supposedly working in a more domestic context in secondary product processing (e.g. making bread and cheese). As the men were *producers* while the women were merely *processors*, males came to be seen as property-owners, and thus the SPR became a contributor to the rise of patriarchy[8]. To quote one of the main proponents of this theory, Diane Bolger:

[7] Webb 1999, pp. 209-215; Serwint 2016, pp. 407-409.
[8] Although see Bolger 2010 for a more nuanced approach to this hypothesis.

Fig. 3. Late Cypriot II Bird-faced Figurine. British Museum, London, inv. n. A 15 (drawing by Paul C. Butler. Used with kind permission).

Fig. 4. Late Cypriot III Normal-faced Figurine. Cyprus Museum, Nicosia, inv. n. A 51 (drawing by Paul C. Butler. Used with kind permission).

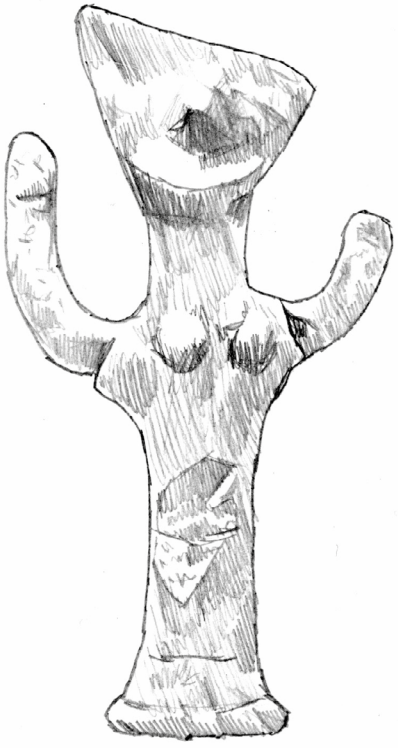


Fig. 5. Cypriot Goddess with Upraised Arms. Cyprus Museum, Nicosia, inv. n. 381 (drawing by Paul C. Butler. Used with kind permission).

> «Women's procreative role was transformed from child-bearer, a role linked primarily to female fertility, to mother, a role restricted by the ideology of the patriarchal family. […] With the disappearance of birthing figurines during the Middle Chalcolithic and picrolite pendants during the Late Chalcolithic and with the attendant collapse of communal modes of production in the face of the growing dominance of political elites, conditions were ripe at the threshold of the Cypriot Bronze Age for the construction of patriarchy. … At the very least, we can infer an *ideological* decline of female status in the conceptual shift from genetrix to mater so clearly manifested by the Cypriot anthropomorphic figurines»[9].

Additionally, if males were also understood to be givers of new life in reproduction, as does appear to be the case in the ancient Near East and Mediterranean[10], then this ideology would correlate with the change in Cypriot iconography whereby women went from producers of children to merely nourishers and care-takers of men's offspring, with concomitant loss in status.

[9] Bolger 1996, p. 371, excerpted, emphasis in original. For the debate between Diane Bolger and David Frankel on this issue, see Frankel – Bolger 1997.
[10] Budin 2016; 2018b; 2023.

This essay is a consideration of women's status in Bronze Age Cyprus with a particular interest in the *kourotrophos* and maternity as expressed in the terracotta imagery. Funerary and domestic architecture are likewise examined to explore archaeological changes in society that accompanied the changes in iconography. The hope is that by pulling together all of these data we might come to a better understanding of sex/gender relations in early Cyprus and the role of maternity therein.

1. Setting a Familial Scene

Before considering the change-over from *genetrix*-type iconography to the rise of the *kourotrophos* in the late 3rd millennium, let us look briefly at changes in both community and funerary organization that provide the ground-work of possible changes in gender relations.

Already in the Middle-Late Chalcolithic periods – the age of the picrolite pendants –changes in domestic/community architecture suggest that changes were afoot regarding notions of personal property in early Cyprus. As noted by Edgar Peltenburg of the southwestern site of Kissonerga-*Mosphilia*, extra-domestic storage pits (for grain?) located in communal areas of the site were replaced in the following phase by domestic storage units located within stone-based buildings. That is to say, notions of personal property in a domestic/familial context became manifest: «there is a discernable trend away from a communal sharing network in the economy to the control of agricultural produce by more individual productive cells based on permanent structures with central hearths»[11].

A similar change in the concept and construction of the family is apparent in the contemporary burial practices. The earlier phase of the Chalcolithic site of Lemba-*Lakkous* in southwestern Cyprus is contemporary with the use of the picrolite birthing pendants mentioned above. Here were excavated 59 graves dating to the Middle–Late Chalcolithic period. All of these were pit graves, all but three of which were single inhumations. Of those three pit graves containing more than one individual, one contained multiple children, one an adult male with a child, and one an adult female with a child[12]. Put simply, the burial record shows minimal signs of familial connections, and no close correlation between woman and child (the maternal relationship).

Contrast this with the 73 Chalcolithic graves and tombs excavated at Kissonerga. While Kissonerga revealed predominantly pit graves (as was the case at Lemba), starting in the Late Chalcolithic period – when private domestic storage began and picrolite figurines disappeared – chamber tombs begin to emerge. Thirteen such chamber tombs were excavated of which seven contained multiple burials. Two of these – Tombs 505 and 515 – contained group burials of an adult male, and adult female, and one or more children[13]. That is to say, by the Late Chalcolithic

[11] Peltenburg 2002, p. 57.
[12] Bolger 2002, pp. 68, 71.
[13] Bolger 2002, p. 72.

archaeological evidence for the emergence of the (nuclear) family as the basis of a property-owning domestic unit becomes evident. Furthermore, the rise of this new social structure goes hand-in-hand with the decline and disappearance of imagery that highlighted women's procreative role. When female iconography reemerges, women are mothers rather than birthers.

2. The Coroplastic Data

Let us consider the new portrayal of women in Early Bronze Age Cyprus: the Plank Figurine and the "Scenic Compositions". At its most basic the Plank Figurine (Fig. 2) is a roughly rectangular, mostly two-dimensional rendering, anthropomorphic mostly in the human face with eyes, nose, and ears. Mouths are extremely rare; jewelry is common, as are incised decorative elements on the clothing and face. The appearance of breasts as sexual markers on several examples – along with the complete absence of phallic bulges – indicates that these figurines are female. The sexed identity is bolstered by several examples which are kourotrophic (Fig. 6). As *kourotrophoi* are (almost) exclusively female throughout the Bronze Age Near East and Mediterranean, this again points to identification as female[14].

Fig. 6. Red Figure Cypriot Kourotrophic Figurine. Institute of the Study of Ancient Cultures (ISAC), University of Chicago, inv. n. X.1611 (drawing by Paul C. Butler. Used with kind permission).

It has been suggested by Anna Laetitia a Campo[15] and Marcia Mogelonsky[16] *inter alia* that these objects highly distinctive in their patterned garb represent individual women, possibly at different phases of life, and may have played some role in rituals involving the exchange of women throughout the Early Cypriot communities. No equivalent existed for men. When appearing on very simplified scenic compositions – decorations for bowls, for example – they are often paired with solitary males (with phallic bulges), perhaps indicating some kind of nuclear family. In such cases the female sex/feminine gender of the one figure is presented via the baby she holds, an indicator as much as her breasts.

While individual plank figurines reveal little about women's status on Cyprus, we can learn more from the scenic compositions. These are terracotta sculptures of daily-life that

[14] Budin 2011. The only exception is 18th Dynasty Egypt, which, obviously, does not pertain here.
[15] a Campo 1994.
[16] Mogelonsky 1988.

have come to light in a number of burials dated to the Early and Middle Cypriot Periods. The sculptures show scenes of (e.g.) ploughing (Fig. 7), herding, bread- or wine-making, religious/funerary scenes, and images of love-making.

They were found primarily in funerary contexts and almost certainly were used as signs of elite status. On them we see depictions of the community in action, at least as understood or even idealized, and thus they provide a better view of women in society than was possible with the individual plank figurines.

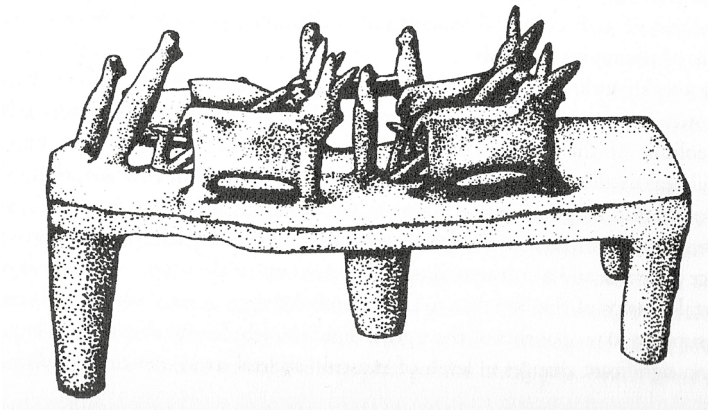
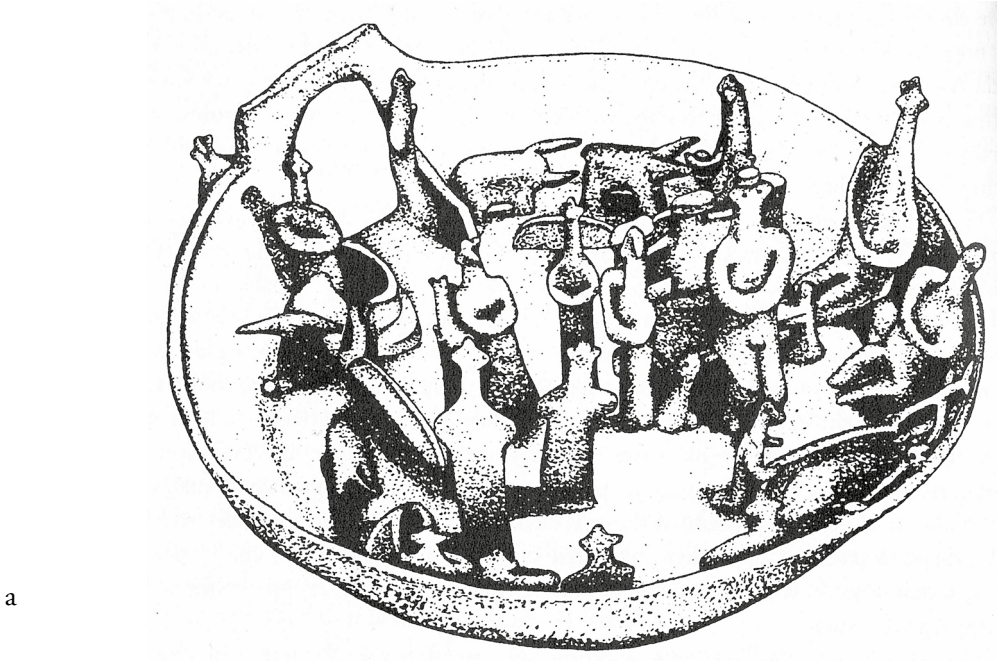


Fig. 7. Early Cypriot Scenic Composition of Ploughing (drawing from Bolger 2003, p. 60, fig. 3.3).

Three particular scenic compositions shed light on women specifically as mothers. The first is the Pierides Bowl, a 28 cm-tall EC III-MC I Red Polished vessel said to have been discovered at Marki and now in the Pierides Collection in Larnaca. The upper rim is decorated with scenes of sexual reproduction and food processing. One side shows a couple embracing, a male and a much larger female. To the left is a woman with a very swollen belly clearly in advanced stages of pregnancy. This pregnant woman has breasts in relief and incised genitals. Past this woman are an animal and a human holding a pounder and standing by a trough. At the far left is another extremely pregnant woman, this time with very large breasts and a clay pellet upon the incised genitalia. It is clear she is giving birth. Side B has a repeat of the male-female embrace motif, although here the male is rendered with large genitalia. Next to this couple is an infant in a cradle board. Other figures decorating the rim are people engaged in bread-making. This series is the only known portrayal of sexual reproduction in all its phases from Bronze Age Cyprus. While the emphasis is on the female role, it cannot be denied that, unlike in the Chalcolithic, the male is shown playing an initial and rather integral role in the process.

The second scenic composition is the Vounous Bowl (Fig. 8). This terracotta from Tomb 22 at Bellapais-*Vounous* is a bowl with one arched entrance. To either side of the entrance are corrals where bovines stand. Standing directly before one of these corrals is a *kourotrophos*, the only female in the scene. In the central area stand five human figures of which two or three have phallic bulges. Beyond



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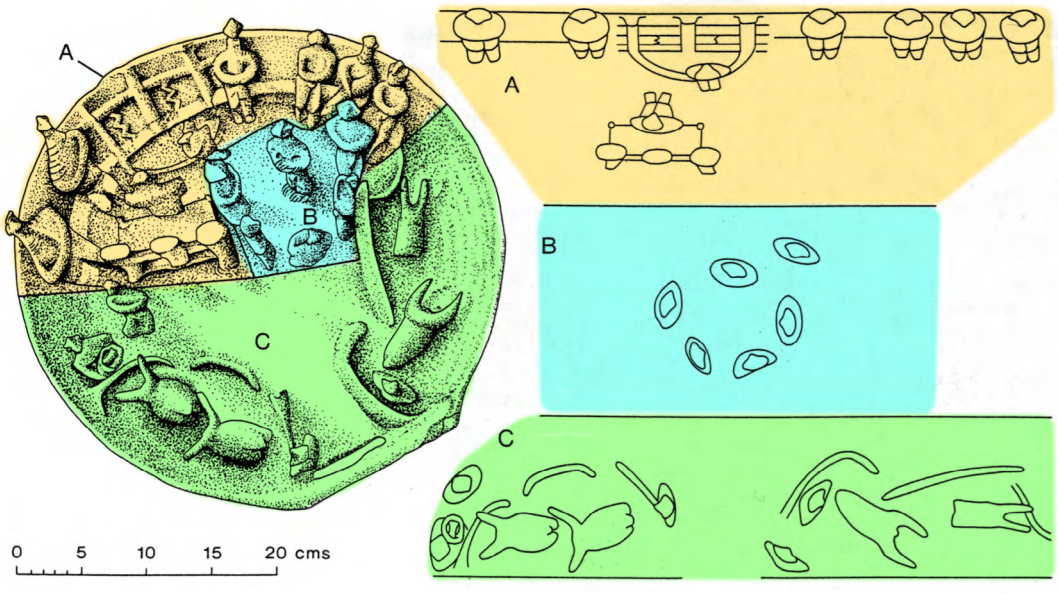

b

Fig. 8. a. Vounous Bowl drawing (from Bolger 2003, p. 40, fig. 2.7); b. Vounous Bowl diagram (from Peltenburg 1994, p. 160). Coloring provided by Paul C. Butler.

these, on a bench at the edge of the bowl, sit six large humanoid figures of which two are clearly male. Just past these seated figures a male with phallus stands facing an architectural structure comprised of three vertical pilasters topped by horned animal heads – a shrine(?). The most significant figure in the bowl is a large male who sits on an enormous chair/throne facing the shrine.

Edgar Peltenburg[17] divided up the bowl based on zones of activity and the size of the characters. Issues of scale are especially pertinent here: The larger size of the seated males is exponential, they are not merely taller than the other characters in the scene. Such gigantism may be intended to reveal greater status, and please note that only males are of greater size. Concerning the zones of activity, Peltenburg writes:

> «Sectors, or thematic units, are defined as having their own internal dynamic focus. In C, near the entrance, are penned bulls with their keepers, and observing the cattle the only female, holding a child. In sector B is a self-contained group of standing males, with arms folded, looking at one another. There is no hint of movement, … and, in the group's inward-looking stance, no contact with adjacent sectors. In A are seated and kneeling figures engaged in some rite before and to either side of the bucranial pillars. The largest male, seated on an elaborate chair, presides over the proceedings and he is directly opposite the iconographic devices on the wall. Viewed in this manner, it may be seen that the compositional structure of the bowl was deliberately designed as a hierarchy, one perhaps expressive of a general social ideology. Thus at the base of this hierarchical construct (C) are bulls, symbols of new wealth/status resources and a female with child, also suggestive of vitality, fertility and prosperity. The woman/child figure is intentionally associated with the cattle by her position and the direction of her face. Next (B), the adult world of decision-taking males. Beyond that (A), sacred rites before symbols of transcendent powers which, if conceptually related with sectors B and C, effectively legitimate the whole social structure»[18].

Put simply, the iconography of the Vounous Bowl suggests that a system of social elites was forming in Cyprus, and women were on the lower end of the status spectrum, appearing in the same category as cattle. Although it might be argued that some of the sex-neutral characters in the composition may also be understood as female – left "neutral" because, unlike the *kourotrophos*, sex or gender is not relevant in their depictions – one must also note the atypical emphasis on male sexual attributes in the larger characters. Sex clearly seems to be an issue in this composition.

The emphasis on male primacy appears to be even further emphasized on the Pyrgos Jug, now in the Limassol Museum (Fig. 9). This 46.5 cm-tall, Red Polished IV Ware jug came to light in a tomb in the Pyrgos necropolis[19]. To the one side of the double spouts a male with phallic bulge and well-incised facial features sits on an elaborately rendered chair/throne. By his feet stands a *kourotrophos* holding an infant at her left side. At his other side sits another *kourotrophos* with relatively large breasts, fully incised facial features, and a large infant in her arms resting upon her lap. The one other character in this grouping is a diminutive, unsexed (but probably female per the jug[20]) individual who holds a tiny jug in the left arm.

[17] Peltenburg 1994.
[18] Peltenburg 1994, p. 160.
[19] Flourentzos 1999, p. 5; Georgiou 2010, p. 76.
[20] On the close association between females and fluid containers in ancient art, see Budin 2018a, pp. 187-190.

Fig. 9. Jug from Pyrgos T.35/16+17. Limassol District Museum, inv. n. LM 1739/7 (drawing by Paul C. Butler. Used with kind permission).

At the other side of the spouts is a male with phallic bulge and clearly rendered facial features who sits upon a stool. Next to him are three individuals working a giant pounder in a round vessel. On the other side of the man is an individual working a plough pulled by a pair of bulls. Underneath the double spouts are three individuals bent over a trough, probably kneading bread. A fourth such character stands just behind them, next to the seated *kourotrophos*. At the base of the spouts is a female (small breasts shown) standing in a vessel that opens to allow some substance to flow into a basin below. Pavlos Flourentzos identifies this as an early scene of grape-stomping, thus wine-making.

As with the Vounous Bowl, positions of status are held by clearly male individuals. The person with the highest apparent status is the "enthroned" male; his elaborate chair highlights his significance in the scene. Both *kourotrophoi* in the scene appear on either side of the enthroned male, while a tiny individual (a girl?) with a jug stands by his feet. It is possible that this is a scene of very literal patriarchy – the paternal figure presiding over two females with babies and a slightly older child. Thus, not only is the person with highest apparent status male, he is enthroned and emphasized within a specifically familial context.

The only other character in the composition who is seated and not working is the male on the far side of the spouts. This may, of course, represent an older, functionally "retired" individual. Nevertheless, his position gives the impression of one managing the workers on his side of the pitcher, just as his greater facial detail makes him appear more prominent in the general context of the compositional scene.

Remembering that scenic compositions were mostly funerary in nature, it is possible to suggest that the enthroned male of the Pyrgos Jug represents the honored dead to whom the jug was dedicated. This might explain his higher status in the scene. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that this male's display of status occurs in what appears to be a familial context – the "patriarch" appears as "ruler" specifically when surrounded by women with babies and children. When contrasted with the presence of working sex-neutral individuals on other parts of the jug, this may suggest that if patriarchy were on the rise in Cyprus, it was occurring within a familial/domestic context[21].

An initial survey of some of the more significant works in terracotta from Early-Middle Bronze Age Cyprus suggests that mothers were seen as secondary members of a family-based, male-dominated society. When shown in the company of men, *kourotrophoi* are depicted with less power either through size, placement, or seating arrangement.

3. Sisters Doin' It for Themselves

Even so, the iconographic record is not entirely depressing regarding the role of women (as distinct from *kourotrophoi*) in early Cyprus. Very significant, and offering a counter to the imagery of the Vounous model, is the Middle Cypriot Shrine Model from Marki (Fig. 10), the best preserved of three such shrine models of Red Polished Ware[22].

Here we see a wall with three vertical pilasters topped with horned animal heads (much as the wall on the side of the Vounous model). Such structures have come to light in funerary architecture, as with Tomb 6 at Karmi-*Palealona*[23], suggesting that the tombs (and thus models) functioned as sites of ancestor cult[24]. In two of the models an amphora or jar sits below the central pilaster, and a human stands before the amphora. Where the sex of this human can be determined, it is a female with breasts. As sex-based occupations tend to be consistent in scenic compositions this might suggest that women were the standard funerary cult ritualists for whatever counted as religion in early Cyprus.

A similar suggestion has been made for a group of women at a grinding bench on an amphora now in the Musée National de Céramique, Sèvres (Fig. 11). In contrast to most contemporary

[21] Budin 2011, pp. 255-257.
[22] Frankel – Tamvaki 1973, p. 39. The three models were originally believed to come from Kotchati (2) and Kalopsidha (1). The one examined here has since been determined to come from Marki-*Alonia*.
[23] Frankel – Tamvaki 1973, p. 40; Keswani 2004, pp. 56-58; Webb 2016, p. 381.
[24] Frankel – Tamvaki 1973, p. 42; Keswani 2004, pp. 56-58.

Fig. 10. Marki Shrine Model. Cyprus Museum, Nicosia, inv. n. 1970/V-28/1 (drawing by Paul C. Butler. Used with kind permission).

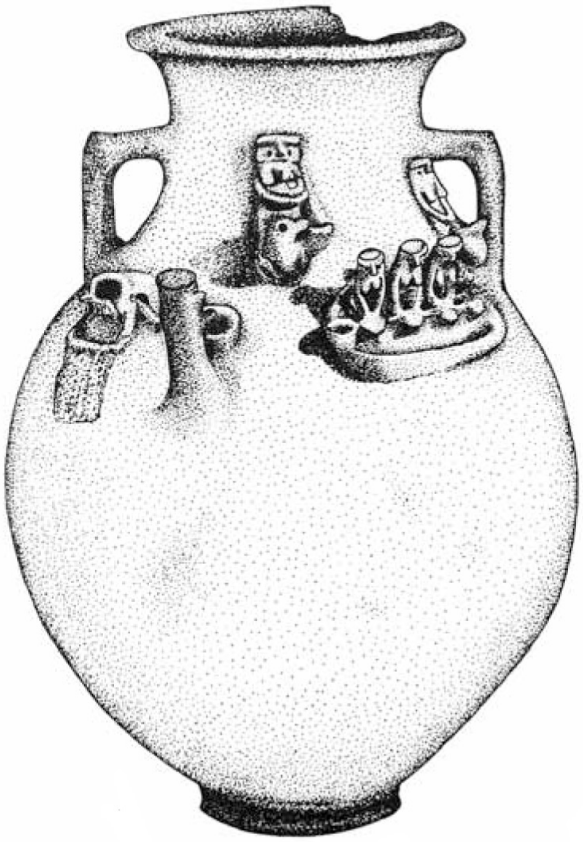

Fig. 11. Scenic Composition Amphora in the Musée National de Céramique, Sèvres, inv. n. MNC 10690 (drawing from Webb 2016, fig. 26.3).

grinding platforms which were found individually and at floor level, these three standing women work before a waist-high grinding platform large enough to accommodate three or four grinders, identical to one discovered at the site of Sotira – including two *in situ* grinding stones – in what the excavator identified as a "cult place". If that identification be correct, then it would again appear that women took part in the preparation of religious rituals. In short, women played a significant role in early Cypriot religion[25].

Furthermore, the evidence from the terracotta repertoire indicates that not only did women contribute extensively to the Cypriot economies as well as religion by their labor, but that social networks existed amongst women in the Early and Middle Cypriot Bronze Ages. In addition to the group-grinding scene above, an Early Cypriot terracotta now in the Louvre Museum shows a group of women working together around a large basin (Fig. 12). The one to the far left carries a

[25] Webb 2016, pp. 381-382.

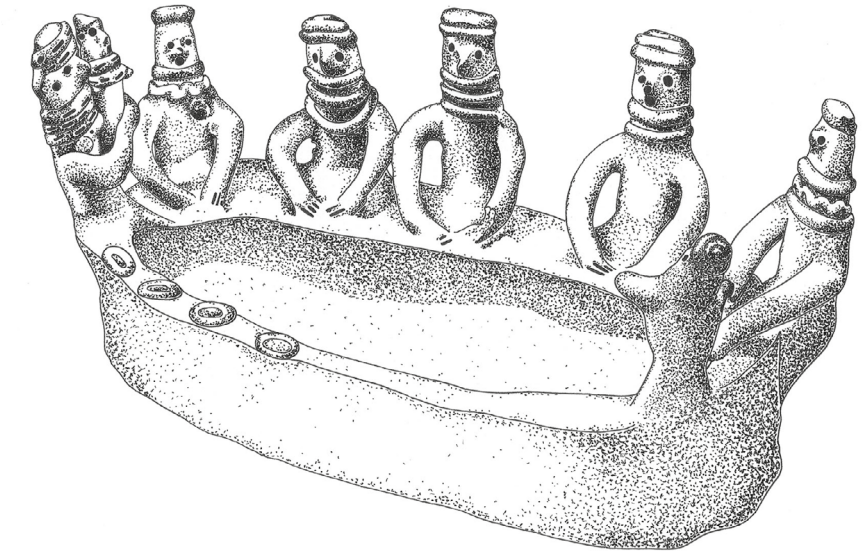

Fig. 12. Cypriot Scenic Composition, Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. n. AM 816 (drawing by Giulia Albertazzi).

child, while the one to the far right holds a water jug, both indicative of female sex[26]. While the central figures give the impression of women working at the local basin, the woman with her hands engaged with the baby also provides a sense of comradery: women gathering together to chat while dealing with the daily chores.

Both archaeological and ethnographic data indicate that the extra-domestic group labor of women of different households forms important social bonds within the community, even (especially) in communities practicing patrilocal (patriarchal?) marriage[27]. For a possible ethnographic parallel to the "women at the basin" terracotta we might consider the use of clay tandir ovens as used in rural villages in southeastern Turkey. As these clay ovens and their fuel are expensive they are typically shared in the community, where ovens are located in small shelters in common areas between houses. Families coordinate baking times and,

> «[w]omen interviewed claim that this system conserves fuel, but it also creates opportunities for socializing. Late afternoon baking is a social time when women and children of all ages meet with their counterparts from different households. In fact, this is the only time that many young women are regularly seen outside their house compounds»[28].

[26] Budin 2011; 2018a, pp. 187-190.
[27] March – Taqqu 1986, pp. 22-23.
[28] Parker 2011, pp. 611-613.

Similar communal oven dynamics appear in the archaeological data. For example, an extensive study by Aubrey Baadsgaard of the placement of cooking ovens in eighteen Iron Age sites in Israel revealed that close to half of these were located *outside* of houses. While 55% percent were purely domestic, 21% were in open courtyards, 10% were in open areas, 5% were in public buildings, and 2.5% were located in streets. Furthermore, the more public the oven, the larger its size. Domestic ovens were on average 55 cm in diameter, those in public buildings were 60 cm, those in streets or open spaces 61 cm, and those in courtyards some 63 cm in diameter[29]. Clearly, the more open the location, the more women making use of the resource. In her final analysis, Baadsgaard concluded: «[T]he evidence clearly indicated that ovens were not located in defined or secluded women's spaces, but rather in highly accessible areas near entryways and courtyards that would facilitate visitation and cooperation among women as part of completing domestic tasks. Variation in oven location suggests that women could arrange the spaces used for domestic activities to accommodate such cooperative networks»[30].

Such female work groups and networks counter the tendency towards male-bonding *versus* female isolation with concomitant drops in female status. Men were also involved in domestic production, of course, but both the scenic compositions and ethnographic comparanda indicate that the sex-based division of labor typically saw older adolescent and adult males working in the fields which were divided along family or clan lines. As such, males worked alongside other males within their *own* kin groups. Females, by contrast, worked with females from within the greater community. This, combined with marriage practices that caused women to form links between households[31], led to Carol Meyer's conclusion that: «Indeed, not only because of their group labor but also because of their marital and consanguineal ties, women were better positioned than men to mediate [inter- and intra-community] relations»[32].

4. Domestic Space

Even so, the tendency towards the increasing separation of non-familial women is hinted at in the domestic architecture of the Cypriot Bronze Age with the growing isolating tendencies of individual households. As noted by March and Tiqqu of women's social networks (and expressed by the extra-domestic placement of ovens as noted above), «the creation of a solidary women's constituency is facilitated by neighborhood architecture, as when houses open onto a common court, share a common water fountain, or are clustered in some other way which encourages regular intimate contact between in-married women from different households»[33]. The opposite

[29] Baadsgaard 2008, p. 29.
[30] Baadsgaard 2008, p. 42.
[31] Budin 2023, pp. 90-93.
[32] Meyers 2003, p. 426. Meyers's focus in this regard was Iron Age Israel, but under similar conditions.
[33] March – Tiqqu 1986, pp. 22-23. "In-married" refers to women brought into the community via patrilocal, exogamous marriage.

is also true: Architecture and urban design that minimize chores done outside the house break up such networks. Over the course of the Cypriot Middle and Late Bronze Ages, households turn increasingly inwards, with evidence of traditionally women's crafts relegated to interior, isolated spaces.

For example, analysis of the domestic units at Middle Bronze Age Marki-*Alonia* in central Cyprus revealed that most if not all small-scale domestic industries took place within the home (Fig. 13). From ca. 2000 BCE these homes showed changes in structure – such as walled courtyards and subdivided interior spaces with increasingly limited access – that suggest a growing concern with household privacy and defense of domestic property. Within these guarded units evidence for production came to light in rooms with permanent hearth structures. To quote excavator Jennifer Webb:

> «Discarded objects include spindle whorls and loom weights, mortars and pounders, grinding equipment, pecking stones, weights, work surfaces, pins, needles, scrapers and chisels, and bowls, jugs, juglets, baking pans and cooking pots. These imply that the processing and small-scale storage of cereals and other foods, spinning and weaving, woodworking and stone tool production were carried out indoors, along with cooking and eating»[34].

The trend towards domestic privatization continued into the Late Bronze Age throughout the island. Analyzing developments in domestic architecture and urban planning at Kourion, Kalavasos, Enkomi, Kition, and others, Diane Bolger noted several factors that would impact women's domesticity, socialization, networking, and status, including:

1. the replacement of traditional, agglomerative settlement plans with independent, freestanding structures;
2. the positioning of doorways to limit public access and afford greater privacy;
3. the functional segregation of work activities, including the construction of special purpose buildings;
4. an increasing privatization of domestic activities (i.e. interior courtyards) including the privatization of water supply (i.e. cisterns inside of buildings);
5. the construction of streets between buildings[35].

What all the architectural data indicate is that there was a clear trend towards domestic isolation occurring over the course of the Bronze Age in Cyprus, and that, more likely than not, it was women primarily who were isolated in those houses.

[34] Webb 2016, p. 377.
[35] Bolger 2003, p. 49.

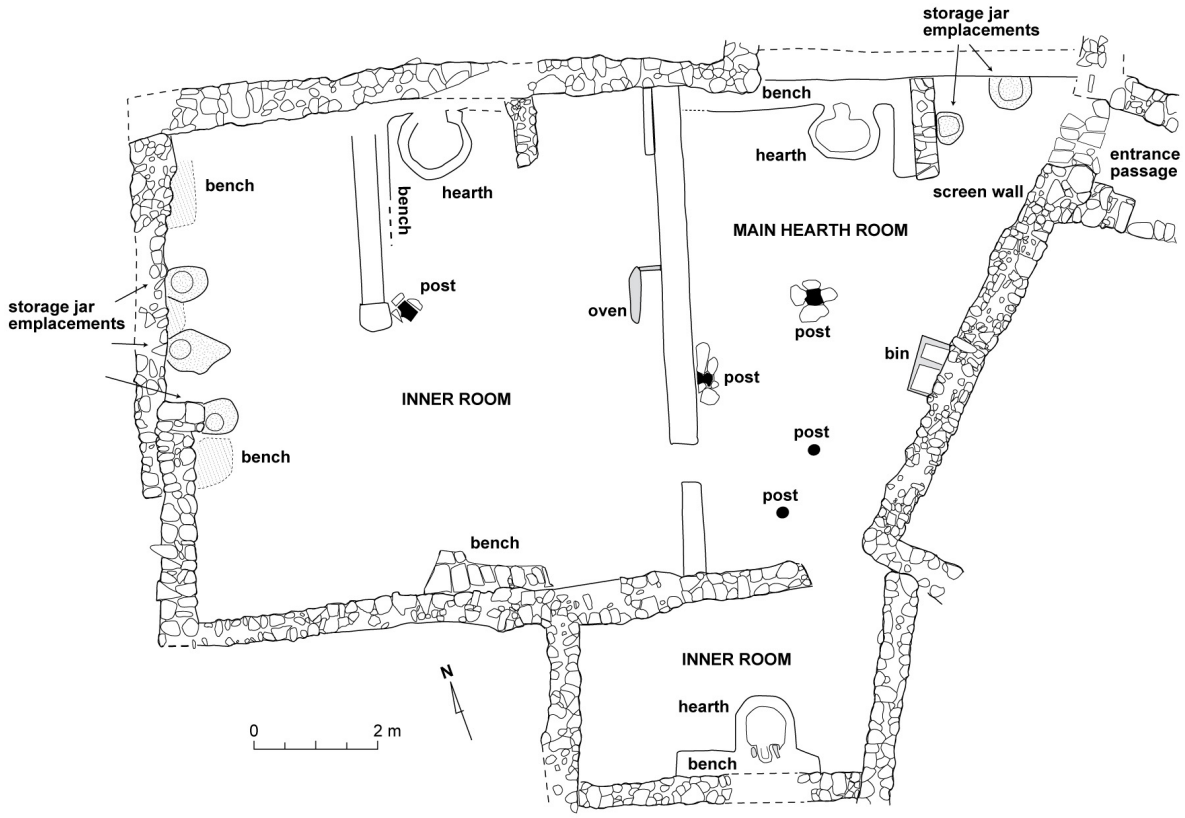

Fig. 13. Domestic unit from Marki-*Alonia* (drawing from Webb 2016, p. 377).

The effect of such domestic isolation on women's status remains in debate. At one extreme, Louise Hitchcock and Marianna Nikolaidou have argued (in an Aegean context) that the more hidden and defended the loci within the household attests to the importance of the tasks accomplished therein and, concomitantly, the importance of those doing such tasks: «The relatively inaccessible location of weaving and storage facilities deep in the interior of Minoan and Helladic houses indicated the material, social, and conceptual importance of these activities – and thus the authority of those in charge»[36]. Thus, seclusion actually benefits women's status.

A more neutral approach is adopted by Jennifer Webb. Writing once again about Marki she notes:

> «The enclosure of the household, in Cyprus as elsewhere, is likely to have led to a relegation of women and women's activities to the interior and to increasingly sharply defined gender identities within and beyond the domestic sphere […] I have argued elsewhere that the repeated portrayal of women in secondary food processing activities on Red Polished ware vessels, and the lack of overlap between male and female tasks, infers a sexual division of labour in which men and women had consistent

[36] Hitchcock – Nikolaidou 2013, p. 508.

gender identities that were related to their productive roles within the household. […] The data now available from Marki, together with residual systemic inventories which suggest that the activities depicted on the vessels (grinding, pounding, baking) were primarily carried out in hearth rooms, does allow us, at least for the Early Cypriot III and Middle Cypriot periods, to link female tasks with interior household space. Whether this signifies gender segregation or even seclusion remains uncertain but seems unlikely. Hearth rooms at Marki and elsewhere also produced residues from flint-knapping, wood-working and ground stone artefact production, suggesting that they were used as work spaces for a wide range of domestic maintenance activities involving both male and female members of the household»[37].

In short, while women are being increasingly positioned in the domestic sphere, the men are often in there with them, and both are (still) contributing to the household economy.

Even so, the trends in domestic architecture show a continuation of isolating features into the Late Bronze Age. Thus, two data must be kept in mind. First, while there is on-going evidence that males continued to labor out-doors as well as within the house, there is less evidence of women maintaining extra-domestic connections. With greater isolation comes less social engagement, fewer mutual support groups, and ultimately a general drop in social status within the community.

5. Figurines Again: From Mother to Mother Goddess to … Gone

Second, alongside this process was the eroding of maternal iconography. The Cypriot Late Bronze Age was a period of intensive contacts first with the Levant and, only slightly later, the Aegean. Levantine influence was strong in Cypriot religion, affecting the design of sanctuaries and the portrayal of deities[38]. Significant was the adoption of specifically Syrian-style Nude Female iconography into the Cypriot repertoire, showing a clear continuity with Early and then Middle Cypriot styles (Fig. 14). Based on the Levantine comparanda and additional Cypriot iconography showing nude females with wings and/or horned miters[39], these new figurines appear to represent goddesses.

It is important to observe that the Syrian forbears of this style are never kourotrophic. Whatever they represent for the Levantine clientele, it is not motherhood. Even so, the kourotrophic tradition in Cyprus was so strong that the Cypriots adapted the Syrian iconography to represent their own world view – approximately 30% of the Bird-faced figurines are kourotrophic[40].

[37] Webb 2009, pp. 264-265.
[38] Webb 1999; Budin 2003, Chapters 5 and 6, with citations.
[39] Budin 2014, p. 199.
[40] Budin 2014.

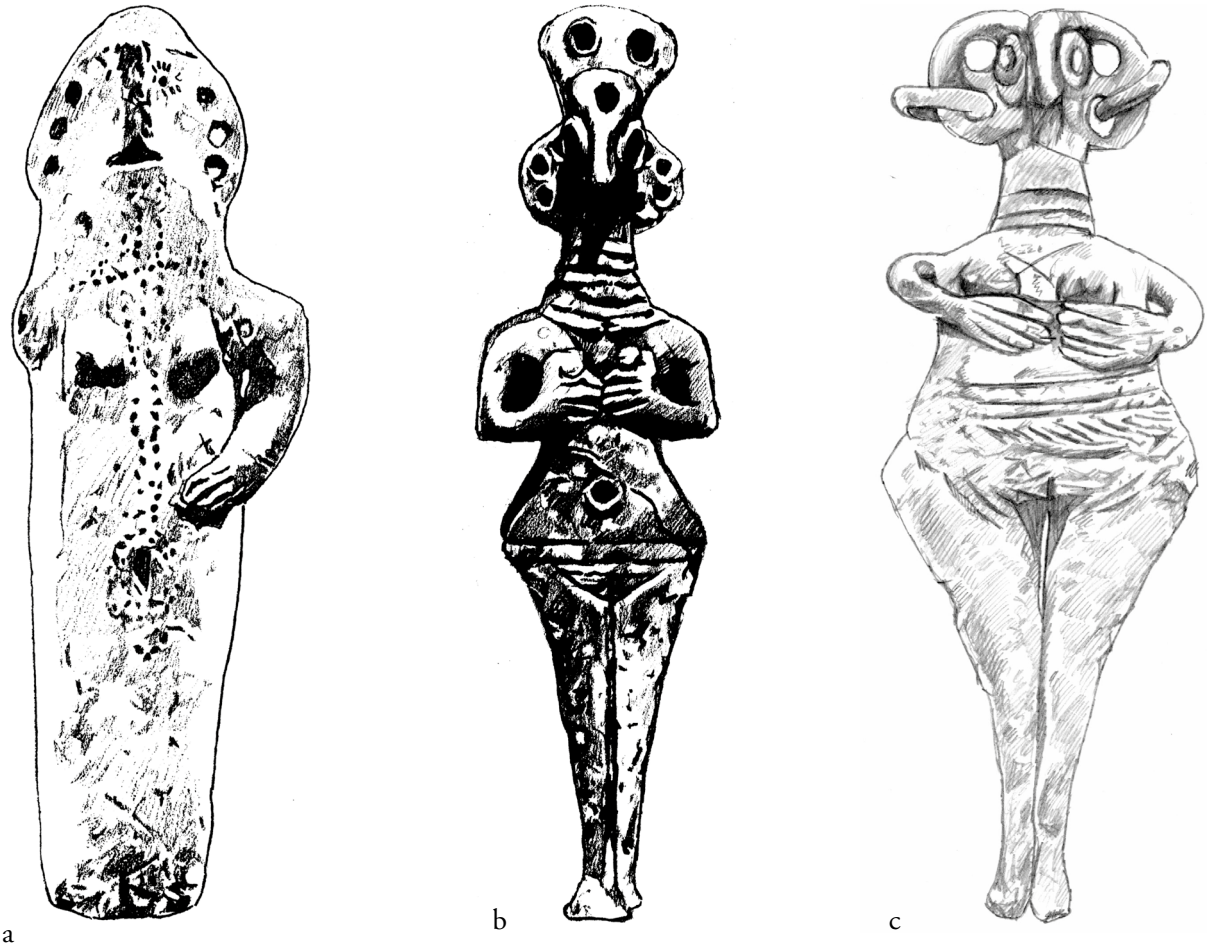

Fig. 14. a. Middle Cypriot Nude Female Figurine. K. Severis Collection, Nicosia, inv. n. 1539 (drawing by Paul C. Butler. Used with kind permission); b. Nude Female Figurine from Ebla. Aleppo Museum, inv. nn. TM.92.P.875+TM.94.P.530 (drawing by Paul C. Butler. Used with kind permission); c. Late Cypriot II Bird-faced figurine. Larnaca District Museum, inv. n. 1021 (drawing by Paul C. Butler. Used with kind permission).

What we have, then, is an extended period – from the Early to the Late Bronze Age in Cyprus – when maternal iconography goes from what appears to be representations of mortal women (plank figurines) to specifically maternal or mother goddesses (kourotrophic Bird-faced figurines). Whatever was happening to (mortal) women's status on the island, the notion of motherhood at least still had power in the divine realm. In fact, the transition may have involved a period of ancestor worship in Cyprus, when the *kourotrophos* (and other such female iconography) went from mortal to ancestress to goddess. Thus, the clothed and decorated plank figurines of the Early Bronze Age represented mortal women within their lineage, as argued by a Campo and Mogelonsky. Over time, with the establishment of social hierarchies in Early and Middle Bronze Age Cyprus, the rise of apparently familial burials and the increased attention to funerary ritual suggest that much of the acquisition of status came to be based on lineage, including what might

be termed a cult of ancestors[41]. It is possible that during this development the female figurines that were originally associated with family came to have greater connections with the concept of long-term lineage, thus serving as small foci in a cult of ancestor worship. Revered great-grandmothers eventually came to be worshipped as goddesses, especially as Levantine influence caused their iconography to conform to near-by goddess representations. Indeed, if the hypothesis of Jennifer Webb and David Frankel *inter alia* is correct that the EC I-II anthropomorphic bas-relief in the dromos of Tomb 6 at Karmi-*Palealona* is a forerunner of the EC III plank figurines, then the images may have been associated with ancestor cult from the very beginning[42].

If the Levantine-inspired Nude Female represents a goddess in Cyprus, then that goddess is distinctly maternal, the end of a long line of maternal females in the Cypriot tradition. Whatever was happening to women in the mundane world, motherhood still had a place in the divine realm.

Until it didn't. When Aegean styles (Goddess with Upraised Arms; *phi*, *psi*, and *tau* figurines) took over in Late Cypriot III (ca. 1200 BCE) all maternal iconography left the Cypriot corpus. However the goddess(es) of Cyprus was envisioned, it was not as a mother. Any connection between maternity and power ceased to be by the dawn of the Age of Iron. When maternal iconography (either divine or mortal) did finally re-emerge on the island, it was in the form of Greek child-birth images and the Phoenician *dea gravida*. But we are now dealing with a distance of six centuries and two changes of population.

The discussions about gender, inequality, and patriarchy in Cyprus and the ancient world in general are still on-going. There are still too many unknowns, and, as we saw, the same data can be interpreted in a multiplicity of ways (e.g. is being relegated to deep within the house a sign of prestige or oppression?). What we do see in early Cyprus is that symbols of female generation – of pregnancy and parturition – appeared at a time when community architecture and burials suggested a more egalitarian society without a strong emphasis on personal property, familial ties, or lineage. The iconography of woman as *genetrix* disappeared as there emerged greater evidence for domestic property and the formation of a family/clan-based society. At this point, the female iconography as presented in the coroplastic arts – the so-called plank figurines and the scenic compositions – presented women as mothers (as well as other kinds of producers) in a society where, when they appeared with babies and men, seemed to have less prestige than the latter (Vounous Bowl, Pyrgos Jug). At the same time evidence suggests that women (and, to a degree, men) were increasingly relegated to the household interior, potentially straining the connections between non-related women in the community. Come the Late Bronze Age, images of mortal women seem to disappear entirely, as the plank figurines of the Early and Middle Bronze Ages morph into the (probably divine) Bird-faced figurines of the Late Bronze Age. Even so, the importance of maternal iconography remained, forcing a distinctly Cypriot adaptation to the Levantine Nude Female, rendering her kourotrophic. This may indicate the existence of a

[41] Keswani 2004, pp. 153-154; Knapp 2008, p. 79, with extensive citations.
[42] Frankel – Tamvaki 1973, pp. 40-42; Keswani 2004, pp. 153-154; Webb – Frankel 2010, p. 189.

maternal deity in LBA Cyprus, possibly even suggestive of a long-standing cult of ancestors on the island[43].

But goddesses are not women, and the presence of kourotrophic divine female figurines says little about the status of actual women and mothers on the island, just as the worship of Athena in 5th-century Athens says little about the status of contemporary Athenian women. But the progression from *genetrix* to *mater* to not-even-mortal-women to no-longer-mothers is clear and distinct on the island. If the iconographic evidence might be correlated with changing architectural and burial patterns, we might still be able to extract some data on gender relations in ancient Cyprus.

Appendix: Chronological Table

3800-3500	**Early Chalcolithic**
3500-2800	**Middle Chalcolithic**
2800-2300	**Late Chalcolithic**
2500-2250	**Philia Facies**
2250-1900	**Early Cypriot Bronze Age (EC)** 2250-2075: **EC I** 2075-2000: **EC II** 2000-1900: **EC III**
1900-1600	**Middle Cypriot Bronze Age (MC)** 1900-1800: **MC I** 1800-1725: **MC II** 1725-1600: **MC III**
1600-1050	**Late Cypriot Bronze Age (LC)** 1600-1450: **LC I** 1450-1200: **LC II** 1200-1050: **LC III**

[43] Budin 2014, pp. 196-201.

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IMAGES OF MOTHERHOOD IN THE VOTIVE DEPOSIT OF KIRRHA: IDENTIFICATION AND INTERPRETATION

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Abstract: The votive deposit of Kirrha, excavated by the French School of Athens in the 1930s, has yielded quantities of terracotta figurines among which female representations largely dominate. The majority of them show generic types that are frequently found in both votive and funerary contexts: they are korai carrying birds or fruits; seated women; and female protomes wearing a diadem, sometimes in association with the veil. These iconographic types are not always understood in the same way by researchers. We prefer to see them as generic images showing a woman in the different social statuses that marked her life. These very common types will not be discussed here, even if they still are subject to debate. Instead, we have chosen to focus on iconographic types and objects that are less common, that are also not always well identified, and whose place and function in their contexts of discovery also are not always understood. These comprise two representations of women with a pregnant belly, models of ripe figs, and models of breads and cakes. All will be viewed as images evoking maternity and testifying to a successful transition to adulthood for women.

Keywords: Kirrha; Votive Practices; Semiological Analysis; Childbirth.

In recent years, the large number of studies devoted to coroplastic repertoires and different iconographic types has significantly advanced the discussion on the interpretation of figurative terracottas, which can no longer be considered banal offerings without any particular meaning. On the contrary, terracottas occupy the same position in archaeological assemblages as other categories of artefacts, such as vases, with which they form a coherent system that can convey important information on religious and social practices[1]. In funerary contexts, terracottas appear most often in the graves of children, youths, and young women, whose unfulfilled social status is highlighted through a repertoire of specially selected iconographic types[2]. In sanctuaries, terracottas seem to be linked to the sphere of activity of the divinity worshipped there and to the rituals placed under divine protection and responsibility. The composition of the typological repertoire, and especially the presence of uncommon and specific iconographic types, can reveal the particular functions of a

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[1] About the place of terracotta figurines in archaeological assemblages and about the votive system, see, for example, Parisi 2017.

[2] On children's grave assemblages in general, see Dasen 2010; 2012. For examples of terracotta figurines in graves of youths and their meaning, see Huysecom-Haxhi 2008; Bonanno Aravantinos – Pisani 2009; Huysecom-Haxhi – Papaikonomou – Papadopoulos 2012; Meirano 2012; Bonanno Aravantinos 2015; Kozanli 2015; Schwarzmaier 2015.

divinity that then could shed light on what circumstances and by which categories of worshippers the figurines were brought and used in the sanctuary[3].

However, it is not always easy to understand the meaning of terracottas, whatever the context in which they were found, even if the name of the venerated deity is already known. This difficulty is due to the nature of the images conveyed by these terracottas and the way in which they were created. Indeed, these images were not simply direct and faithful illustrations of reality, but rather were mentally elaborated constructions, artificial montages of previously selected elements which were then combined to form a coherent and meaningful discourse. This discourse reveals a number of values that were those that society, at a given moment, had chosen to emphasize. Thus, images were a form of language, whose codes and operations must have been widely known in order to transmit its content[4]. We can add to this first difficulty the use of visual plays in the form of metaphors, or analogies, which make the reading and understanding of many images even more complex. Some of these images are less encountered in the coroplastic repertoire, and when they are present, it is very often in a very small number of examples, if even only one. Because of this they are generally disregarded and placed at the end of catalogues without in-depth commentary. Yet, it is these images that I would like to highlight in the following pages by discussing examples from the votive deposit of Kirrha, the ancient port of Delphi. In this paper I would like to propose a semiotic analysis with the goal of highlighting the semantic values that these images conveyed and that could allow us to understand the meaning of such dedications in this specific context. The images that interest us here are two representations of pregnant women, models of ripe figs, and a model of bread, all of which are considered to be images evocative of maternity that reflect a successful transition to adulthood for women.

1. The Coroplastic Assemblage of the Kirrha Deposit: General Information

1.1. *The Excavation and Discovery of the Deposit*[5]

In 1936 the French School of Athens continued its exploration of the Pleistos valley that had been ongoing since the end of the 19th century. This coincided with the beginning of excavations in Delphi, by extending exploration to the hill of Aghios Georgios. Brought to light were the remains of the prehistoric city of Krisa and the village of Kirrha at the seaside, where the ruins of a stoa

[3] For some examples of votive repertoires and their meaning in context, see Muller 1996, pp. 467-500; Merker 2000, pp. 334-341; Ismaelli 2011, pp. 167-201, 207-235; Huysecom-Haxhi 2015; Kopestonsky 2016; Di Tuccio 2021.

[4] On the anthropological approach of the images, based on a semiological analysis, see the work of the Paris School on Greek vases: for example, Lissarrague – Schnapp 1981; Vernant *et al.* 1984. For an adaptation of this methodological approach for terracotta figurines, see Papaikonomou 2008, more specifically pp. 701-706 about the terracotta «doll»; Papaikonomou – Huysecom-Haxhi 2009; Huysecom-Haxhi – Papaikonomou – Papadopoulos 2012.

[5] *BCH* 60 (1936), p. 466; *BCH* 61 (1937), pp. 457-459; *BCH* 62 (1938), p. 470; Jannoray 1937; Huysecom-Haxhi 2015, § 3-5.

and an enclosing wall had been detected at the place called *La Magoula* by H.N. Ulrichs during his travels in Phocis in 1837[6]. The excavations were undertaken by J. Roger, M. Jannoray, and H. van Effenterre from 1936 to 1938 and revealed prehistoric remains and several structures of the Classical period (Fig. 1).

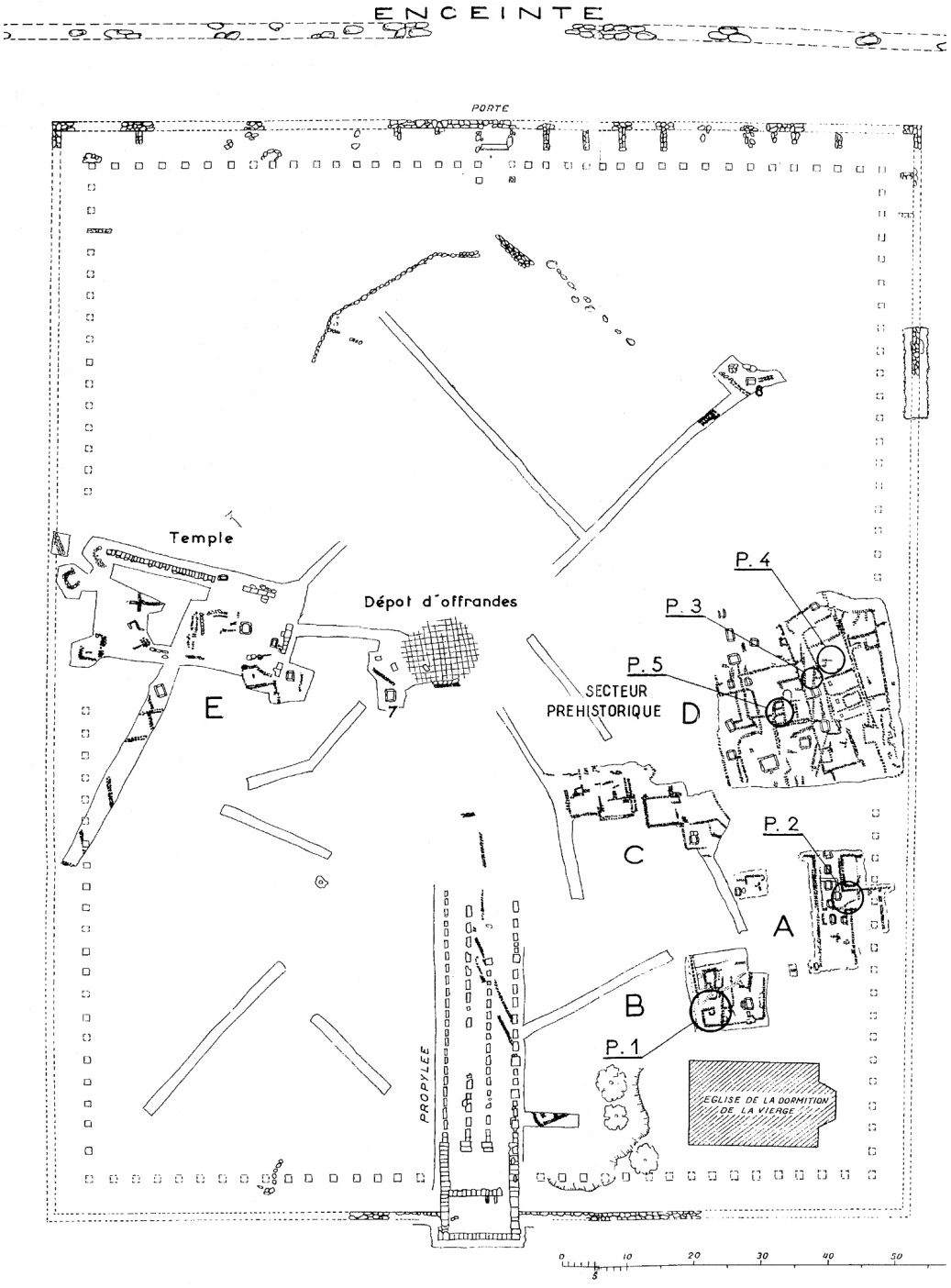

Fig. 1. Map of the Magoula (after Dor – Jannoray – Effenterre 1960, pl. III).

[6] Ulrichs 1840, p. 8.

There are few remains of the stoa seen by Ulrichs. It delimited a rectangular space of about 160 meters from north to south and 130 meters from east to west. The south and north sides were open in the middle, the first by propylaea giving access to four rows of slabs that may have supported columns, and the second by a doorway whose threshold is still preserved. Almost in the center of this space, a rich deposit of figurative terracottas and of ceramic vases, especially miniatures, was discovered.

The deposit was 10 to 12 centimeters thick and extended over an area of 12 by 8 meters at a depth of 75 centimeters below ground level. A few meters west of the deposit, the foundations of a rectangular building with two columns *in antis* were discovered, which was identified by the excavators as a temple and immediately linked to a passage in book seven of Pausanias indicating the existence in Kirrha of a temple of the Apollonian triad[7]. According to the excavators, the remains brought to light would belong to an older temple, which would have preceded the one seen by Pausanias.

1.2. *The Coroplastic Assemblage*

The terracottas form an assemblage of around two thousand examples, most dating from the end of the sixth to the middle of the fourth century[8]. Their study has allowed us to document a minimum of one thousand three hundred figurines, the vast majority of them belonging to types of female representation[9]. These latter comprise approximately one thousand one hundred and thirty, or eighty-seven percent of the total number of terracottas counted, and are divided into three main categories that include generic types of standing women, seated women, and partial representations. The standing women (about 430 examples) are mainly archaic *korai*, holding attributes, or signs[10], (bird, fruit, flower, fawn…) in their hands and whose types originated in Corinthian workshops[11] (Fig. 2.a), as well as fifth-century *peplophoroi* of various origins with one hand on the chest or both arms at the side of the body (Fig. 2.b). A few *hydriaphoroi*, rare examples of semi-nude women, two representations of pregnant women[12], and fragments of Tanagran types complete this corpus. Fewer of the female miscellaneous types are shown seated (about 170 examples). Some of them are holding a bird or a flower to their breast, while others simply have their hands on their knees (Fig. 2.c). Most of them are wearing a headdress to which a veil is sometimes added. The partial representations (about 530 examples) are classified into different categories depending on how they are realized at their lower edge. First, we find archaic or archaizing protomes, limited to the face

[7] Paus. 10.37.8.
[8] For a more detailed overview of the coroplastic repertoire: Huysecom-Haxhi 2015, § 15-18.
[9] According to the last recorded count in 2022.
[10] According to the semiological approach which gives meaning to each element of the composition. These elements are signs that convey a message to be decoded: see note 4.
[11] For some examples: Huysecom-Haxhi 2015, figs. 5-7; 2018, fig. 1; 2022, fig. 1.
[12] Huysecom-Haxhi 2015, fig. 8; 2018, fig. 3.

Fig. 2. Terracotta figurines from Kirrha, Museum of Amphissa. a. Inv. n. 4766 (H. 10,9 cm); b. Inv. n. 6614 (H. 12,6 cm); c. Inv. n. 6654 (H. 12,1 cm); d. Inv. n. 3594 (H. 9 cm); e. Inv. n. 4799 (H. 9,3 cm).

and truncated across the neck, wearing a diadem and a veil[13]. We also find protomes terminating at the shoulders, or above the chest, that have a rounded outline to their lower edge (Fig. 2.d)[14]. The final category includes bust-protomes terminating at the waist, with or without forearms[15]. Male types represent about five percent of the whole[16], animals and mythological or fantastic images, especially sphinxes (Fig. 2.e) and crouching Silenes, about three percent each. In addition, there are unusual objects including models of ripe figs and a model of bread, which, together with two representations of pregnant women, are the subject of this contribution.

[13] Huysecom-Haxhi 2022, fig. 5.
[14] Huysecom-Haxhi 2018, fig. 2 (local type); 2022, figs. 6-7 (local type); 2015, fig. 8 (Corinthian type).
[15] For a very original local type: Huysecom-Haxhi 2015, fig. 12.
[16] Huysecom-Haxhi 2015, fig. 7 (Corinthian type of naked young man with a lyre), fig. 9 (types of naked squatting boys).

2. Identification and Interpretation of the Pregnant Women

The first iconographic type that can be directly linked to pregnancy and motherhood shows a standing woman with a round belly, with taut and smooth skin that she reveals by pulling up her tunic (Fig. 3.a). Framed by long hair, the face shows a wide smile that makes the cheeks swell and the cheekbones strongly protrude, giving it an almost grotesque appearance. One could think of a mask placed on the face as on the figurines of comic actors, some of which have a padded belly suggesting pregnancy. However, the overall appearance of our figurine, the arrangement of its clothing, and its particular gesture find no parallels in the known repertoire of well identified types representing actors disguised as women[17] (Fig. 3.b). Nor does this Kirrha figurine have anything to do with the grotesque types of old women with caricatured faces, whose physiognomy, with a large distended belly marked by folds, is very different.

Consequently, one might consider our type as representing a young pregnant woman[18]. Her jovial face should not surprise us. Similar faces in fact are found on other female types related to motherhood, such as the figurine from grave 1107 of the Lipari necropolis, whose burial was identified as that of a girl of the end of the fifth century[19]. This figurine shows a woman with a face marked by a wide smile, who is sitting back in a chair that encloses her, while she cradles a baby on her lap. (Fig. 3.d). Two other terracottas were part of the funerary assemblage from this burial: an articulated Corinthian-type figurine dressed in a short chiton, and a very damaged figurine of an enthroned woman. These three figurines worked together and created meaning by evoking three stages in a girl's socialization process. Often seen as dolls that girls offered to a kourotrophic divinity at the time of puberty and marriage, these articulated figurines, because of their movable limbs and the presence sometimes of musical instruments (crotales, cymbals, tambourine), can also refer to the choral group of young girls. The girl's chorus is a well-known place of education and domestication, in which girls *pro tou gamou* participated and which they left at the time of their wedding[20]. The next step in the girls' socialization process could be symbolized by the type of seated woman, in whom some might see an image of the girl now transformed by her new status of married woman[21]. But the event that radically changes a woman's life and brings her into the circle of mature and accomplished women is the birth of the first healthy child, which allows the

[17] About the terracotta figurines of pregnant woman: Lee 2012, pp. 29-30.
[18] Pregnant women are few in number in the coroplastic repertoire. The large number of figurines of pregnant women and women in childbirth discovered in the cave at Itanos in Crete is remarkable: Kanta – Davaras 2011, pp. 28-33, 110-120.
[19] Schwarzmaier 2015, pp. 236-237 and fig. 3; p. 242.
[20] On the terracotta "dolls": Larson 2001, pp. 101-110; Dasen 2005, pp. 67-71; Papaikonomou 2008, pp. 697-705; Griesbach 2014; Rath 2016, pp. 30-55; Gutschke 2019; Dasen – Verbanck-Piérard 2022. On the chorus of young girls and transition rites: Calame 1977; Lonsdale 1993, pp. 169-205.
[21] The seated woman, especially in its generic version without divine attributes, is one of the most debated types of the archaic and classical coroplastic repertoire. For the identification of generic types of seated women, mainly archaic and classical, with mortals in their married status, see Huysecom-Haxhi – Muller 2007, p. 241; 2015b; Huysecom-Haxhi 2008, p. 65; 2016, pp. 147-150; Muller 2022, pp. 340-341. Against this interpretation: Croissant 2017.

Fig. 3. a. Figurine with "big belly" from Kirrha, Museum of Amphissa, inv. n. 4710 (H. 8,3 cm); b. Terracotta figurine of an actor, Metropolitan Museum of Art 13.225.17, late Classical, open access: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/248767; c. Articulated terracotta figurine from Emporion (after Papaikonomou 2008, p. 703, fig. 9); d. Woman giving birth, from the grave 1107 of Lipari necropolis (after Schwarzmaier 2015, p. 242, fig. 3); e. Woman after childbirth, from the grave 92/21 of the eastern necropolis of Pella (after Lilimpaki-Akamati 2017, p. 39, fig. 5).

woman to experience the *lochia*, the final stage of her socialization[22]. The figurine of a smiling woman holding her newborn on her lap could thus refer to this fundamental moment in the life of women. The coroplastic ensemble left in this Lipari tomb would be perfectly suitable for a girl who died before she could attain the full status of *gyne*. The deceased girl had in her grave images of all that her premature death did not allow to her experience in life, but some of these images may

[22] On the socialization of girls and their various successive statuses, see in general: Dillon 2002, pp. 211-235; Bodiou 2009; Lee 2012; Serafini 2013; Taraskiewicz 2013. On the feminine body, the childbirth: King 1998, pp. 21-39; Mehl 2009. On the first child: Wickramasinghe 2013.

have had an apotropaic function. Their presence in the grave could thus protect the young deceased from becoming an evil demon like Gellô, who died before her maternity, or Mormô, who failed in her role as a mother[23]: the reclining woman, with her grotesque smiling face, may have had this function.

The same theme of the young woman in labor holding her newborn child seems to be identifiable as well in a single figurine from tomb 92/21 in the eastern necropolis of Pella[24] (Fig. 3.e). The figure, nude to the waist, is lying on her side, while she cradles a baby wearing a pointed cap in her left arm. The representation is surprising both because of the caricatural aspect of the face, where all the features are strongly accentuated, and because of the treatment of the anatomy of the belly, divided into an upper zone incised with a sort of large cross marking the navel, and a lower zone criss-crossed by three superimposed folds that evoke the flabby appearance of the skin after childbirth: the appearance of large, sagging breasts is characteristic of lactation, as the baby's hand on the woman's left breast suggests breastfeeding. This special treatment of the anatomy of the belly is similar so that on certain articulated Corinthian figurines of which a specimen, coming from a girl's tomb of the necropolis of Emporion in Spain (Fig. 3.c) was recently the subject of an interesting commentary by Irini Papaikonomou. She has seen in this way of representing the belly a means of focusing the attention on the fundamental function of this part of the female body, a container for the production of future citizens[25]. The figurine of Emporion is also holding *krotala* which, as mentioned above in relation to the articulated figurine of the tomb of Lipari, refer to the dance, one of the activities of the young *parthenos*, whose future destiny as a mother could be announced and highlighted by the particular treatment of the belly that evokes that of a woman after childbirth. In the context of a girl's grave, this figurine thus takes on its full meaning by symbolizing the tragic fate of the child who will not be able to meet the expectations of society and family, forever staying blocked in her status of young *parthenos pro tou gamou*.

In Kirrha the repertoire does not include women in childbirth, but the two women with large bellies are direct allusions to the function of mother that society and the family expect of their daughters after marriage[26]. Their particular gesture, which seems inappropriate in this situation, of raising their garments to show their belly and pubis, may surprise the spectator, but it is a well-known gesture, similar to that of the *anasyrma* performed by Baubô, a character also linked to maternity[27]. By rolling up her garment and revealing her genitals, Baubô makes Demeter laugh. The gesture is then helpful and liberating because it removes the sadness and the pain of the goddess. It can also be protective because the view of the naked pubis can cause disgust and fear. The gesture of our pregnant women can thus have a double purpose: on the one hand to focus the attention on

[23] Johnston 1995; Guettel Cole 2004, pp. 218-219; Patera 2005.
[24] Lilimpaki-Akamati 2014, pp. 80-81, n. 255, fig. 293; p. 367 and fig. 683; p. 475; 2017, p. 39, fig. 5.
[25] Papaikonomou 2008, pp. 702-704, fig. 9; 2013.
[26] These two figurines, of the same size (8,3 cm) and quality, belong to the same generation and could have been made with the same mold.
[27] On the *anasyrma*: Volokhine 2012, and more especially for Baubô, pp. 762-768. See also Olender 1985; Dasen 2008, pp. 276-279.

this essential feminine zone to underscore its important functionality; on the other, to avoid the evil eye and to scare away the danger that threatens the child and the future mother during this period of high risk. It is also certainly this same apotropaic and protecting function that we must see in the caricatural and smiling aspect of the face of these young pregnant women and these young women in childbirth[28].

3. Pictorial Metaphors of the Female Womb

If the figures of pregnant women emphasize, in an obvious way, the state of pregnancy, other objects indirectly refer to it in the form of pictorial metaphors that reference human fecundity, by focusing on certain fundamental, but hidden, parts of the female body and maternity. This is the case for the models of figs, of which six examples have been identified in the Kirrha deposit, making it a rather exceptional set. In fact, votive and funerary contexts in Greece have yielded very few models of figs, and never in such multiples; pomegranates and ribbed apples are much more frequently encountered. The specimens from Kirrha can be classified into two categories according to the degree of ripeness represented: ripe figs, with an elongated body, but with the ostiole still closed (Fig. 4.a); fruits with a more advanced degree of ripeness, with the ostiole open allowing the pulp to be seen. Two examples in this group are more easily identified as figs because of the fibrous and granulated appearance of the pulp (Fig. 4.b). The simpler appearance of a third example that has a smooth interior could also make one think of a large bread whose crust would have cracked during cooking (Fig. 4.c), but a comparison of the images with the real fruit rather points toward an identification as an opened fig (Fig. 4.d). Such models of figs are very rare in Greek contexts and are known, to my knowledge, only in Kirrha and Corinth, which provided a beautiful and very elaborate example[29], and from where the figurines of Kirrha certainly come.

The fig is a fruit containing a multitude of small seeds and is therefore a clear symbol of fertility and prosperity[30]. It is especially closely associated with the body of girls whose belly, like the fig, contains flowers that blossom and become fruits. As does the fig, the female womb will open when the body becomes mature, with the coming of the first menstruation announcing that marriage and motherhood are approaching for the girl. The link between young women and figs is even closer if, through a visual play, we overlay the opened fig on the female vulva with which the fruit is compared, for example in Aristophanes[31]. To pick up the fig has the same meaning as to pick up the flower and alludes to the moment when the young girl who has arrived at the *hebe anthous*, "the bloom of youth", must be married, deflowered, and become a mother. The female

[28] About the apotropaic function of the caricatural figures and of the obscene wide-open vulva: Mitchell 2013, pp. 279, 283.
[29] Stillwell 1952, pp. 237-238, n. 16, pl. 52.
[30] On the values attributed to the fig in antiquity: Papaikonomou – Huysecom-Haxhi 2009, pp. 141-143.
[31] Thiercy 2003, p. 21; Henderson 1991, p. 130, n. 127.

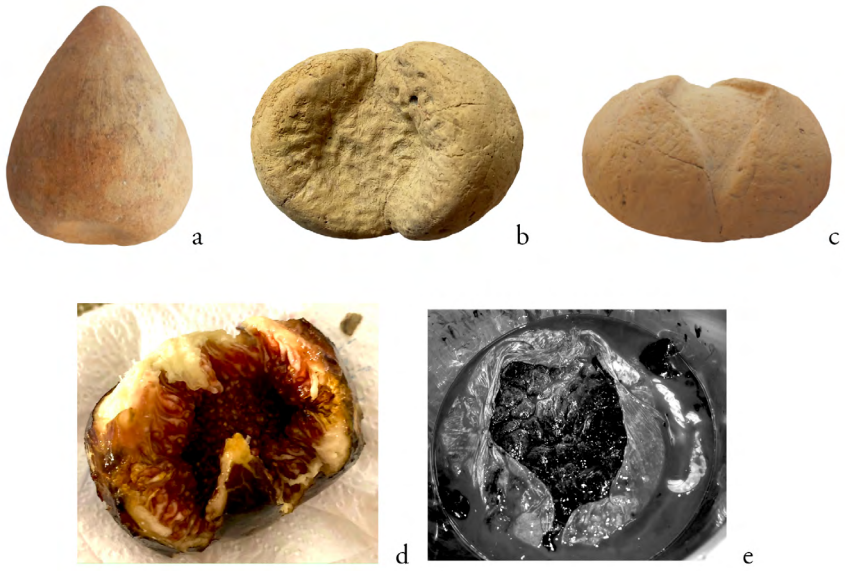

Fig. 4. a-c. Terracotta figurines from Kirrha, Museum of Amphissa (a, c) and Delphi (b), inv. n. 4712 (L. 4,9 cm), inv. n. F 168 (L: 5,7 cm), inv. n. 4714 (L: 4,9); d. Natural fig (photo by the Author); e. Human placenta (after Papaikonomou – Huysecom-Haxhi 2009, p. 145, fig. 13).

genitalia then appear as a door, an entrance that must be opened, and the belly that contains the reproductive womb as a container for the future fruits of marriage[32]. Hence a series of natural and vegetal metaphors suggest the fertility and maternity of women, without having to exhibit the female organs in a shocking way. Thus, if we look closely, we realize that the image of the cracked fig, whose opening invites us to look inside, is also comparable to the human placenta (Fig. 4.e), which is also made up of an envelope containing the nutriments that are indispensable for the development of the foetus, just as the fig contains the flowers that it makes grow and transform into fruits[33]. The polychromy, no longer preserved in the exemples from Kirrha, would certainly have strengthened the likeness. On the Corinthian figurine, the outer surface was painted in black and the interior of the fruit in red, which accentuated the analogy with the placenta.

Another singular object in the Kirrha deposit also could evoke the idea of fecundity and gestation by its particular shape and decoration. The object in question (Fig. 5.a) is circular in shape, six centimeters in diameter and two and a half centimeters thick, decorated with eight petal-like elements, whose tips converge on a large round knob in the center. The Kirrha model looks very much like the round and ribbed cakes with an *omphalos* that appear, for example, on reliefs of heroic

[32] On the womb seen like a container as jar, pot, jug, wineskin and like a door that needs to be opened: King 1998, p. 33; Dasen – Ducaté-Paarmann 2006, pp. 240, 254. See also Henderson 1991, p. 137, for terms used to designate the female sex in ancient texts.
[33] Papaikonomou – Huysecom-Haxhi 2009, pp. 144-145, and compare fig. 13; p. 145 with fig. 4.c; p. 136 and with here our Fig. 4.b.

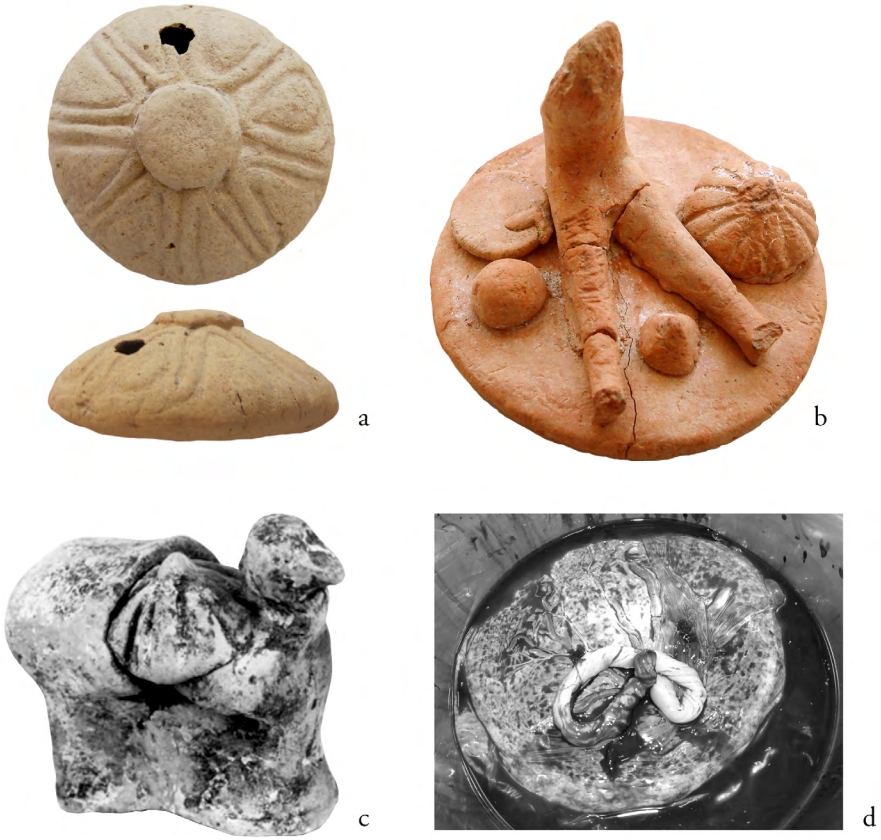

Fig. 5. a. Terracotta figurine from Kirrha, Museum of Amphissa, inv. n. 4795 (H. 2,4 cm, diam. 5,9 cm); b. Terracotta group from the grave 59 of the Myrôni site in Thasos (after Papaikonomou – Huysecom-Haxhi 2009, p. 137, fig. 5); c. Terracotta from Boeotia (after Tsoukala 2009, p. 394, fig. 5); d. Human placenta (after Papaikonomou – Huysecom-Haxhi 2009, p. 144, fig. 11).

banquets[34] or on the Attic *choes* in relation with children[35]. These cakes are often called *popana omphalota* and have been identified with the *plakous* described by Athenaeus and the placenta the recipe for which is described by Cato. It is a cake made of layers of honey and goat cheese wrapped in thin sheets of dough, the last one being tightened and forming a knot at the top[36].

In the coroplastic repertoire, this cake can be recognized on three small models showing it in female contexts. In two cases[37], certainly from Boeotia, it is found in the hands of a woman putting

[34] See examples in Dentzer 1982, fig. 513 (R261), p. 598, pl. 85 (Tegea); fig. 527 (R276), p. 600 (Delos), pl. 86; fig. 616 (R385), p. 612, pl. 100 (Athens).
[35] For *plakous* cakes in relation with a boy: Neils – Oakley 2003, p. 146, cat. 101 (Princeton University Art Museum y1962-13); Moore 1997, n. 742, pl. 78 (Athens, Agora Museum P 12523). For *plakous* cakes in relation with a girl: Neils – Oakley 2003, p. 147, fig. 7; Moore 1997, n. 782, pl. 81 (Athens, Agora Museum P 7685).
[36] Ath. 2.58d-2, 14.643e-644d; Cato *Agr*. 76. About the *plakous*: Papaikonomou – Huysecom-Haxhi 2009, pp. 148-151; Grandjouan – Markson – Rotroff 1989, pp. 57-67; Dentzer 1982, p. 520; Brumfield 1997, pp. 150-152.
[37] Tsoukala 2004, cat. WPC58, pl. 7; 2009, p. 394, fig. 5 (Athens, National Museum 12637).

it in or taking it out of an oven (Fig. 5.c). The third model comes from tomb 59 of the necropolis of Myroni in Thasos[38], where the deceased could have been a girl of about ten years old, according to the characteristic funerary goods that accompanied her burial (Fig. 5.b). Placed in the center of a circular base, four objects of different shapes and sizes are arranged around a seated figure with legs stretched out and spread apart. Fragments of the body and the head found inside the grave allow us to identify the figure with a girl. Of the four objects on the base, three are identified as cakes: the small smooth ball placed on the child's right, the triangular dome, which could be a *pyramis*, placed between the legs, and the large bundle-shaped cake placed on the left side. The flat object against the upper right thigh is a small mortar with the pestle in the shape of a finger, which suggests that the girl herself may have participated in the making of the breads by undertaking the grinding of the seeds, an activity that she was also able to perform outside the home as part of a religious service[39]. In all three cases, the cake is modeled in much the same way: large and round, it has an irregular surface with deep grooves that meet at the top where they form a knot. Because of its name, shape, and consistency, the *plakous* cake has already been compared to the human placenta[40]: it could evoke in a metaphorical way the face of the fetal side (Fig. 5.d). The thin sheets sometimes described as veils in the texts allude to the membranes, the amnion and the chorion, that cover the placenta. *Chorion* is the Greek term for placenta. And the summit button is doubly associated with motherhood, as it refers on the one hand to the knot formed by the umbilical cord, and on the other hand to the *umbilicus* of the newborn. Kirrha's model, however, has a different feeling, especially because of the presence of ridges, instead of deep grooves. But is this also not a visual play to allude to the umbilical cord on the placenta, just as the top button refers by formal analogy to the knot of the umbilical cord and the newborn's navel? If cake or bread and the terracotta models that reproduce them in miniature can be used to translate the idea of the human placenta, it is because the development of the foetus is compared to the baking of bread in an oven, which then becomes a metaphor for the womb[41]. But the woman also has a privileged relationship with the preparing and cooking of food. It is the woman in fact who, within the home, prepares the meals by transforming, grinding, kneading and cooking the raw products, such as the grains, just as she herself receives seeds in her body that she makes grow and become ripe thanks to the heat of her womb[42]. As do the figs, the bread models, through different visual effects, indirectly evoke the destiny of girls who were born to shape children and to cook them in their bodies. It seems to me that it is exactly this fate that is summarized in the Thasian model through the various objects accompanying the little girl, and to which the figs and our *plakous* cake in the sanctuary of Kirrha also refer.

[38] Papaikonomou – Huysecom-Haxhi 2009, pp. 137-138, figs. 5, 7-8.
[39] On girls' religious activities and roles before marriage, in general: Brulé 1987, pp. 79-116, and for the cakes prepared by girls for religious festivals, see pp. 114-116; Dillon 2002, pp. 37-72. About the cakes used in sacrificial rituals, see specifically Kearns 1994; 2011.
[40] Papaikonomou – Huysecom-Haxhi 2009, pp. 143-146.
[41] About the womb as oven: King 1998, p. 33; Bodiou 2006, pp. 162-163; Papaikonomou – Huysecom-Haxhi 2009, p. 152. See also Henderson 1991, p. 143, for references to ancient texts.
[42] On the feminine body that cooks the children to socialize them: Levi-Strauss 1981, p. 341.

4. Conclusion: What Do These Offerings Tell Us and Why Are They Found in This Sanctuary?

The semiotic analysis of these images of pregnant women showing off their large bellies and pubis, models of ripe figs and of *plakous* cakes, has revealed a specific semantic field linked to fertility, pregnancy, and childbirth, the three main concerns of women and more widely of Greek society. Giving birth to a healthy child and surviving childbirth, especially the first birth, in fact, ended the girl's socialization process by making her a member of the group of accomplished women. It was the production of the first healthy child that allowed the girl to access a socially recognized and valued status, that of mother. Girls were thus prepared from an early age for this function, certainly at home through contact with other women, but also perhaps through rituals, collective or not, performed in sanctuaries at important stages, such as at the time of *menarche*, on the approach of the wedding, and during pregnancy. During this transitional period, between menarche and childbirth, the girl was in a dangerous in-between, where the protection of divinities was sought to successfully make this transition. All young and fertile women needed this kind of assistance. These images that draw attention to an area of the body to be protected are thus quite typical gifts from women between menarche and menopause: the very young *parthenoi*, the *nymphai*, and the still fertile *gynae*. These are their images in the form of conventional generic representations, full or abbreviated, that occupy the rest of the repertoire of the votive deposit: korai, seated women, protomes, and protome-busts, which constitute ninety percent of the repertoire, are thus to be considered not as divine effigies, but as idealized images of mortal women, whose attitude, gestures, attributes, and clothing, such as the veil, refer to the different social identities that could have been realized and to the roles they imply in family, public, and religious life[43].

These few objects also testify to an important aspect of the personality of the divinity that the generic types do not highlight. The divinity of Kirrha was not only asked to promote and protect the fertility of women in general, a function common to many female divinities. These objects, if their interpretation is valid, also show that the goddess was active in the most critical moments for women, during pregnancy and childbirth, for which the help of the divinity was absolutely necessary. We do not know the name of the divinity worshipped in Kirrha. The link suggested by the excavators with the sanctuary of the Apollonian triad seen by Pausanias lacks epigraphic confirmation, so this is just only one hypothesis among others.

However, objects suggesting the female womb and motherhood have an important place among the offerings brought to a sanctuary where deities such as Leto and her daughter Artemis would be venerated. The first is well known for her role as a mother and the relationship she has with her children, but also for the particularly difficult birth she experienced[44]. Artemis, who

[43] On the meaning of the elements of the composition, signs and symbols: Huysecom-Haxhi – Muller 2007, pp. 238-243; 2015b, pp. 427-433.
[44] Foukara 2017, pp. 64-66.

often bears the name of *Lyzizonos*, *Lochia*, or *Eileithyia*, is intimately linked to the physiological maturation of young girls, to menstruation and childbirth, which she can make fatal for the mother and the child by shooting her murderous arrows[45]. These spheres of activity also are reflected in two attributes found in the hands of about twenty corinthian korai traditionally identified with images of Artemis in her role as hunter and protector of animals: the little deer, which, as a wild animal, is comparable to the girls *pro tou gamou*, who must be domesticated; the bow, which also can be seen as a symbol of the deep pain that perforates the body of a women in childbirth like sharp arrows, and in particular of the primiparous[46]. I do not know if these statuettes are really images of Artemis, and I do not know if it is this goddess who is honored at Kirrha, but the characteristics of the coroplastic repertoire is exactly what one would expect in a sanctuary of this goddess.

[45] On Artemis and her field of action, and her link with birth and motherhood: King 1983; Guettel Cole 2004, pp. 198-236; Serafini 2013.
[46] Pironti – Pirenne-Delforge 2013, pp. 75-76.

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STATUETTES REPRESENTING WOMAN/EN WITH INFANT/S IN FUNERARY CONTEXTS IN ANCIENT ITALY

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Abstract: In this paper, we want to investigate grief and loss in coroplastic evidence. We will focus on the presence in the tombs of statuettes depicting women with infants. They are rather rare objects in tombs in central Italy, but they increase in Magna Graecia and Sicily. We will try, on the one hand, to investigate the reason for this absence in the northern territories and, on the other hand, why some of these objects are present in the funerary contexts of the more southern territories. In this regard, it is worth noting that these figurines are very frequent in sacred areas in the Etruscan-Latial-Campanian area, but they are rare in funerary contexts, while in southern Italy they are rarely found in sanctuaries but, speaking of percentage ratio, frequent in funerary contexts. The influence of Greek culture here must be the key to interpreting this difference.

Keywords: Coroplastic Art; Motherhood; Votive and Funerary Religion; Ancient Italy; Magna Graecia.

1. Introduction

Within broader research on votive statuettes representing adult/s with infant/s in ancient Italy[1], I will focus in this chapter on those that come from funerary contexts. Narrowing the research on this group is very interesting as regards the different use of sacred space and the different use of these objects – which are usually found within votive contexts – in Central and Southern Italy (including Sicily).

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[1] This work is the result of research conducted at the Max-Weber-Kolleg für kultur- und sozialwissenschaftliche Studien at the University of Erfurt as a Marie Curie Cofund Fellow with the project Mothering and (Wet)Nursing: A Metadisciplinary Study on Parenting Strategies in the Greek and Roman Worlds ("MaMA": Mothers and Mother-like Figures in Antiquity) and research sponsored by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung for the project Votive Statuettes of Adult/s with Infant/s from Southern Italy and Sicily from the end of 7th to 3rd century ECB: A Cross-Cultural and Meta-Disciplinary Perspective. The results are mainly published in Pedrucci 2020 and Pedrucci 2022. This chapter is also published with slight modifications in an article in collaboration with Francesca Fulminante (Fulminante – Pedrucci 2024).

I distinguish between statuettes of breastfeeding *(kourotrophoi*, KT) and baby-carrying (*kourophoroi*, KP) women. This distinction and, as a consequence, the use of two different words, is often neglected by scholars. Normally, statuettes of women with children are labeled as *kourotrophoi* as a whole¸ even though they potentially represent different social roles: in fact, only a biological mother can breastfeed (the mother of the baby, the wet-nurse, and, since we are dealing with Roman material, possibly the maternal aunt, the *matertera*), but any woman (relatives – aunts, grandmothers… – attendants…, besides, of course, the mother and the wet-nurse) can carry a baby on her knees, in her arms or on her shoulder. This distinction can provide insights into religious agents and the reasons for, and the degree of involvement in, such ritual practices. Any of these figures might have had an interest in performing a ritual for the child, either in a disinterested way or simply out of affection for him. See Pedrucci 2013, pp. 71-73; 2018, pp. 70-117. Cfr. Parisi Presicce 1986.

Statuettes representing a woman with infant/s – in Southern Etruria and *Latium Vetus* also representing couples of two women or a man and a woman with infant/s – are typical objects used in ancient Italy to communicate with supra or non-human entities about issues regarding mothering, childhood, coming of age, well-being, and family belonging. They are particularly frequent in the Latial-Etruscan-Campanian area[2].

In Southern Etruria and *Latium Vetus* – where the above-mentioned couples are also present – the offering of these votive objects took often place in sanctuaries within the urban area. The central position made the ritual performance very visible and, therefore, we can argue that it was important not only for individual members of a family but for the entire community.

If we move south, the number of statuettes not only decreases significantly (except for Capua), but they are more frequently found in sacral contexts in suburban or extra-urban areas, not rarely near water sources. There is also an increasing number of findings inside tombs. The use of these votive objects seems to be in Magna Graecia and Sicily, on the one hand, more relegated to the feminine dimension, and on the other, more private. Campania seems to be somehow in-between (as indeed it is, geographically speaking).

I will start with a brief catalogue of the material found in graves, which is regrettably often devoid of the context of finding (especially the age and gender of the deceased); therefore, working assumptions and conclusions will be highly speculative.

[2] Comella 1981.

2. Catalogue

2.1. *Latium Vetus*

1. Praeneste 1
(Fig. 1), moulded terracotta (extremely well-worn mould), beige clay, with black inclusions, H 16,5 cm, W 6 cm. Colombella's necropolis. Rome, Museo Nazionale etrusco di Villa Giulia, inv. n. 13550. 3rd cent. BCE.
Description: *kourotrophos*, a seated woman, suckling a baby at her left breast. She is wearing a tunic and a mantle; her head is covered by the mantle; she has a central parting. She is holding her (uncovered left) breast from which the baby is feeding; the naked baby is touching the woman's left knee. Her feet are on a footrest.
Bibliography: Pensabene 2001, p. 393f., pl. 107.11.

Fig. 1. *Kourotrophos* from Praeneste – Praeneste 1 (after Pensabene 2001, pl. 107.11).

2.2. *Southern Etruria*

2. Caere 1
(Fig. 2), moulded terracotta (bivalve mould), H 25 cm, W 10,5 cm, Necropolis of La Banditaccia, Tomb of "Teste votive". Cerveteri, Museo Nazionale Cerite, inv. n. 2013.4.410. 3rd cent. BCE.
Description: double *kourophoros*, two enthroned women with a child seated between their legs on the ground. They are wearing a plissé tunic and a mantle, which covers their heads. Their left hand is on their left knee; they are holding a *patera* with their right hand. They have curly hair with a diadem. The infant has its hands on its knees; it is wearing a tunic, which leaves its torso uncovered. Their feet are on a footrest.
Notes: the exact place of the finding is unknown. The statuette was found together with two female busts with *polos* and a draped figurine in a context already widely looted. It was located inside a monumental complex called "Tomba delle Teste Votive". Nearby, a

Fig. 2. Double *kourophoroi* from Caere – Caere 1 (after *Mater et matrona* 2014, p. 125).

small lithic sarcophagus with few grave goods inside was found. This is an extremely fine object that was usually put in a votive deposit; it is typical of this area.
Bibliography: *Mater et matrona* 2014, p. 124.

3. Volterra 1
(Fig. 3), moulded terracotta, yellowish clay, H 17 cm, Necropoli del Portone, Tomb D. Volterra, Museo Etrusco Guarnacci, inv. n. 228 (or 22?). 3rd cent. BCE.
Description: *kourophoros*, a standing woman holding a swaddled baby with her left arm. She is wearing a plissé tunic and a mantel, which covers her head.
Notes: it is likely a miniaturized copy of the so-called *Kourotrophos* Maffei. It is likely a local artifact. Part of rich female grave goods (?).
Bibliography: Maggiani 1985, p. 128, n. 154.

Fig. 3. *Kourophoros* from Volterra – Volterra 1 (after Maggiani 1985, p. 128, n. 154).

4. Vetulonia 1
(Fig. 4), Egyptian greenish glass past statuette, H 6,2 cm, Vetulonia's necropolis, "Poggio al bello" tomb.
Description: *kourotrophos*, a seated goddess of the type *Isis lactans*, but the attributes and a hieroglyphics inscription indicate that she is Mut breastfeeding her son Conm. Other Egyptian objects were found in archaic tombs in this necropolis.
Notes: part of rich female grave goods.
Bibliography: Falchi 1887, p. 508f.

Fig. 4. *Kourotrophos* from Vetulonia – Vetulonia 1 (after Falchi 1887, pl. XIX, fig. 6).

5. Falerii Veteres 1
(Fig. 5), *kernos* made of three small jars; three *kourotrophoi* are attached to the jars. From Falerii Veteres, Valsiarosa's necropolis, tomb 12 (XCV.) Last quarter of the 4th cent. BCE. Civita Castellana, Museo Archeologico dell'Agro Falisco, inv. n. 1071.
Description: *kourotrophos*, an enthroned woman with an almost frontal baby on her knee. The head of the infant rests on the woman's left arm. She is wearing a plissé tunic and a long mantle, which covers her head

and the infant's body. She is wearing a diadem. Her feet are on a footrest. The throne usually has ears.
Notes: this vase belongs to the so-called silvered pottery, previously known as "Volsinian pottery". This highly specialized ware, characterized by the tin outer coating, imitating metal, and usually enriched by applied figured decorations, is one of the utmost interests in the Etrusco-Italic *koiné* of the early Hellenistic period. This typology of KP is very widespread in Etruria.
Bibliography: Michetti 2003, p. 204, n. 355.

2.3. *Campania*

6. Nola 1
(Fig. 6), moulded terracotta (used single mould), yellow-reddish clay, H 15 cm. Nola, pre-Roman necropolis, Tomba II.
Description: *kourotrophos*, a seated woman suckling a baby at her left breast. She is wearing a tunic and a big mantle; she is wearing round earrings. She has shoulder length braids. She is holdings her (uncovered left) breast from which the baby is feeding. Her feet are on a footrest. The naked baby is reaching for the right arm of the woman with its left hand.
Notes: it might come from the tomb of a man.
Bibliography: Bonghi Jovino – Donceel 1969, p. 41, pl. III.1.

7. Cumae 1
(Fig. 7), moulded terracotta, traces of white and red painting, H 19 cm, Cuma (Kyme/Cumae), necropolis, sep. CLXXI. 4th cent. BCE.
Description: *kourotrophos*, a seated woman suckling a baby at her left breast. She is wearing a tunic and a big mantle; she is wearing round earrings (separately moulded). She has shoulder length braids. She is holdings her (uncovered left) breast from which the baby is feeding. Her feet are on a footrest. The naked

Fig. 5. *Kernos* made of three small jars; three *kourotrophoi* are attached to the jars from Falerii Veteres – Falerii Veteres 1 (after Michetti 2003, pl. LXXVII).

Fig. 6. *Kourotrophos* from Nola – Nola 1 (after Bonghi Jovino – Donceel 1969, pl. III.1).

baby is reaching for the right arm of the woman with its left hand.
Notes: the statuette was found close to the skull of a young boy. Cumae was the first ancient Greek colony on the mainland of Italy.
Bibliography: Gabrici 1913, p. 635f., pl. CXI.5.

8. Grigignano 1
(Fig. 8), moulded terracotta, Grigignano (Atella). Succivo, Museo Archeologico dell'Agro Atellano. From tombs. 4th-3rd cent. BCE.
Description: *kourotrophos*, a seated woman suckling a baby at her left breast. She is wearing a tunic and a big mantle; she is wearing round earrings. She has shoulder length braids. She is holdings her (uncovered left) breast from which the baby is feeding. Her feet are on a footrest. The naked baby is reaching for the right arm of the woman with its left hand. Her feet are on a footrest.
Notes: 2 items.
Bibliography: Petrillo 2018, p. 686; Pedrucci 2022, p. 231.

9. Teanum 1
(Fig. 9), moulded terracotta, H 19 cm. Teano (*Teanum Sidicinum*), Hellenistic necropolis (Gradavola), T. 42.
Description: *kourotrophos*, a seated woman suckling a baby at her left breast. She is wearing a tunic and a big mantle; she is wearing round earrings. She has shoulder length braids. She is holdings her (uncovered left) breast from which the baby is feeding. Her feet are on a footrest. The naked baby is reaching for the right arm of the woman with its left hand. Her feet are on a footrest.
Notes: 3 items. In Pedrucci 2022, p. 234, is wrongly labeled as Tea 3 ter. It should be Tea 3 bis. These figurines, together with Teanum 2 (below), were found inside the same tomb. The grave goods (six female terracotta statuettes, one female bust, *lekythoi*.

Fig. 7. *Kourotrophos* from Cumae – Cumae 1 (after Gabrici 1913, pl. CXI.5).

Fig. 8. *Kourotrophos* from Grigignano – Grigignano 1 (after Pedrucci 2022, p. 231).

One of the statuettes represents a woman with folded arms while sleeping: death as an eternal sleeping?) might suggest that a woman was buried there.
Bibliography: Gabrici 1910, pp. 87-88.

10. Teanum 2, moulded terracotta, h 12 cm. Teano (Teanum Sidicinum), Hellenistic necropolis (Gradavola), T. 42.
Description: *kourotrophos*, a standing woman suckling a swaddled baby at her left breast. She is probably wearing a tunic and a mantle, which covers her head and her shoulders.
Notes: this figurine should be Tea 3 ter in Pedrucci 2022, p. 234, but it is unfortunately missing.
Bibliography: Gabrici 1910, pp. 87-88.

11. Pontecagnano, moulded terracotta, Pontecagnano, Tomb 908, proprietà del Mese, inv. n. 16292-94, and Tomb 894, proprietà Russomando, inv. n. 36514. Second half of the 4th cent. BCE.
Description: *kourophoros***,** an enthroned woman with an infant in her arms. The infant is held with the woman's left arm in an almost vertical position. It is covered by the woman's mantle. She is wearing a tunic and a mantle and a diadem; she is holding a round object (a *patera*?) with her right hand. Her feet are on a footrest. Throne with ears.
Notes: 2 items.
Bibliography: Miller Ammerman 2002, p. 129, n. 8.

2.4. *Magna Graecia*

12. Paestum 1
(Fig. 10), moulded terracotta. Paestum, Tomb 19. Before 380 BCE.
Description: *kourophoros*, an enthroned woman with an infant in her arms. The infant is held with the woman's left arm. It is covered almost entirely by the woman's mantle. She is wearing a tunic and a mantle

Fig. 9. *Kourotrophos* from Teanum – Teanum 1 (after Gabrici 1910, fig. 56).

Fig. 10. *Kourophoros* from Paestum – Paestum 1 (after Pontrandolfo 1977, fig. 29.2).

and a diadem. She is putting her right hand on the baby. Her feet are on a footrest. Throne with ears and leonine paws.
Notes: 2 items. They were found in a tomb with extremely rich female grave goods.
Bibliography: Pontrandolfo 1977, pp. 53-56, fig. 29.2.

13. Taras 1
(Fig. 11), moulded terracotta, H 23 cm. Taras, tomb. Taranto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (MArTA), inv. n. 20088. End of the 4th cent. BCE.
Description: *kourotrophos*, a seated woman suckling a naked infant at her left breast. The infant is reaching for the woman's left breast with its left hand. The infant has its back to us; the woman is holding its wrist. She is wearing a plissé tunic and a mantle on her shoulders; she is wearing a crown; the curled front hair parted at the middle of the forehead. The statuette has a round base.
Bibliography: Hadzisteliou Price 1978, p. 36, n. 280.

14. Taras 2
(Fig. 12), moulded terracotta. Taras, Contrada Corti Vecchie (tomb). Taranto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (MArTA), inv. n 208411. 2nd cent. BCE.
Description: *kourotrophos***,** a seated woman suckling a naked infant at her left breast. The infant is reaching for the woman's left breast with its left hand. The infant has its back to us; the woman is holding its wrist. She is wearing a plissé tunic and a mantle on her shoulders; she is wearing a tubular *stephane*; the curled front hair parted at the middle of the forehead. The infant is winged. The statuette has a round base.
Bibliography: Hadzisteliou Price 1978, p. 36, n. 281.

15. Taras 3
(Fig. 13), moulded terracotta. Taras, Via O. Argentina (tomb). Taranto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale

Fig. 11. *Kourotrophos* from Taras – Taras 1 (after Hadzisteliou Price 1978, fig. 24).

Fig. 12. *Kourotrophos* from Taras – Taras 2 (after Pedrucci 2022, p. 300).

(MArTA), inv. n. 208403. 2nd cent. BCE.
Description: *kourotrophos*, a seated woman suckling a naked infant at her left breast. The infant is reaching for the woman's left breast with its left hand. The infant has its back to us; the woman is holding its wrist. She is wearing a plissé tunic and a mantle on her shoulders; bareheaded. The statuette has a round base.
Bibliography: Hadzisteliou Price 1978, p. 36, n. 282.

16. Taras 4
(Fig. 14), moulded terracotta, H 21 cm. Taras, Via D. Peluso (tomb). Taranto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (MArTA), inv. n. I.G. 52068.
Description: *kourotrophos*, a seated woman suckling a naked infant at her left breast. The infant is reaching for the woman's left breast with its left hand. The infant has its back to us; the woman is holding its wrist. She is wearing a plissé tunic and a mantle on her shoulders; she is wearing a diadem.
Bibliography: De Juliis – Loiacono 1985, p. 370, n. 452; Ducaté-Paarmann 2003a, Grande Grèce 24, 69, 70, 71.

17. Taras 5
(Fig. 15), moulded terracotta. Taras, Contrada S. Lucia, Giardino Ramerino (tomb). Taranto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (MArTA), inv. n. 1752. End of the 4th cent. BCE.
Description: *kourophoros*, a seated woman with a swaddled infant in her arms. The infant is held with the woman's left arm in an almost vertical position. She is wearing a tunic and a mantle (?). She is holding a round object in her right arm (a flat bread or a jug?). Caricatural style.
Bibliography: Pedrucci 2022, p. 322.

18. Taras 6
(Fig. 16), moulded terracotta. Taras, Contrada S. Lucia (tomb). Taranto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale

Fig. 13. *Kourotrophos* from Taras – Taras 3 (after Pedrucci 2022, p. 300).

Fig. 14. *Kourotrophos* from Taras – Taras 4 (after De Juliis – Loiacono 1985, p. 370).

Fig. 15. *Kourophoros* from Taras – Taras 5 (after Pedrucci 2022, p. 322).

(MArTA), inv. n. 1685. 6th-5th cent. BCE.
Description: *kourophoros*, a standing (headless) woman holding a swaddled infant in her arms. The infant has its head on the woman's left arm. She is wearing a tunic and a mantle.
Bibliography: Pedrucci 2022, p. 323.

19. Taras 7
(Fig. 17), moulded terracotta, traces of red/pink paint on the woman's tunic. Taras, Contrada Pizzone (tomb). Taranto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (MArTA), inv. n. 135284. 3rd cent. BCE.
Description: *kourophoros*, a standing woman with a standing girl beside her; she is holding its left hand with her right hand. The woman is looking toward the child; the child is holding a piece of her tunic with her free hand. They are wearing a plissé tunic; the woman is wearing a shawl. They are represented in the act of walking. The statuette has a round base.
Bibliography: Pedrucci 2022, p. 323.

20. Taras 8
(Fig. 18), moulded terracotta, traces of white englobe, H 17 cm. Taras, Contrada Corvisea, tomb 22 (scavi di fondazione per il secondo padiglione della nuova Caserma Marinai). Taranto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (MArTA), inv. n. 20096. 3rd-2nd cent. BCE.
Description: *kourophoros*, a standing woman with a standing girl beside her; she is holding its left hand with her right hand. Tanagra figurine. On an oval plinth.
Bibliography: Pedrucci 2022, p. 324.

21. Taras 9
(Fig. 19), hand-modeled terracotta group, dark hazelnut clay, H 7,6 cm, base 9,2 x 5,2 cm. Taras, via Mezzacapo/via Minniti, Tomb 18 April 1936. Taranto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (MArTA), inv. n. 50325. 350-325 BCE.

Fig. 16. *Kourophoros* from Taras – Taras 6 (after Pedrucci 2022, p. 323).

Fig. 17. *Kourophoros* from Taras – Taras 7 (after Pedrucci 2022, p. 323).

Fig. 18. *Kourophoros* from Taras – Taras 8 (after Pedrucci 2022, p. 324).

Description: *kourophoros*, an old (headless) woman looking after a baby in cradle together with a dog.
Bibliography: Graepler 1996, pp. 243-244, n. 186.

22. Thuriae 1

(Fig. 20), moulded terracotta, H 10,5 cm. Thuriae, in the area of the city on the plain west of the acropolis, insula III, t. 7/2004 with an external deposit in a tomb. Gioia del Colle, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. n. MG 4873. End of the 4th cent. BCE.
Description: *kourotrophos* (?), a seated woman probably suckling an infant (missing) at her left breast. She is probably holding her left breast. She is wearing a tunic and a mantle, which covers her head and partially the infant. She has curly hair; she is wearing round earrings.
Notes: it was part of the grave goods of a five-year-old girl along with two other statuettes representing a seated woman with a goose on her lap and 19 miniature-sized artifacts.
Bibliography: Pedrucci 2022, p. 302.

23. Bauste 1

(Fig. 21), moulded terracotta, hazelnut clay, H 9 cm. Bauste, Fondo Melliche (necropolis). Lecce, University, Laboratorio di Archeologia, inv. n. (sc.): V85 575.I.G145710. First half of the 4th c. BCE.
Description: *kourophoros*, a seated woman with an infant in her arms. The infant is held with the woman's left arm in an almost vertical position. It is covered by the woman's mantle. Her feet are on a footrest.
Notes: votive deposit related to the burial of an old woman (about 70 years old) and an infant 2-4 years old.
Bibliography: D'Andria 1990, p. 120, n. 170; Mastronuzzi – Mellisano 2015b, pp. 24, 26.

24. Lokroi 1

(Fig. 22), moulded terracotta, H 7,8 cm. Lokroi, necropolis in Contrada Lucifero, sporadic. Reggio

Fig. 19. *Kourophoros* from Taras – Taras 9 (after Pedrucci 2022, p. 325).

Fig. 20. *Kourotrophos* (?) from Thuriae – Thuriae 1 (after Pedrucci 2022, p. 302).

Fig. 21. *Kourophoros* from Bauste – Bauste 1 (after D'Andria 1990, p. 120, n. 170).

Calabria, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (MArRC), inv. n. MRC 723 (ex 8005, 4371).
Description: *kourophoros*, the upper part of a woman with a young girl seated on her right shoulder and one young boy seated on her left shoulder. The girl is wearing a tunic, a diadem (or a conical bonnet?), round earrings; she has a central parting. The boy is naked with a conical bonnet. The woman is wearing a V-neck tunic; she is probably moving toward the viewer's right. Her hair is waved. The girl is holding a round object (a fruit? Or the right hand of the woman?) with her right hand; her left hand is resting on the woman's head. The boy is holding a lyra with her left arm; his right hand is resting on his left thigh.
Bibliography: Meirano 2018, p. 133.

Fig. 22. *Kourophoros* from Lokroi – Lokroi 1 (after Meirano 2018, fig. 1).

25. Lokroi 2

(Fig. 23), moulded terracotta. Lokroi, necropolis in Contrada Lucifero, sporadic. Reggio Calabria, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (MArRC), inv. n. MRC702 (ex 7996, 4370).
Description: *kourophoros***,** a squatting (pregnant?) woman. Her breasts are drooping down. She is holding with her left arm a swaddled baby in a vertical position. She is wearing a belt over your rounded belly. Her head is missing.
Notes: possibly, she's giving birth or just gave birth.
Bibliography: Meirano 2018, p. 133.

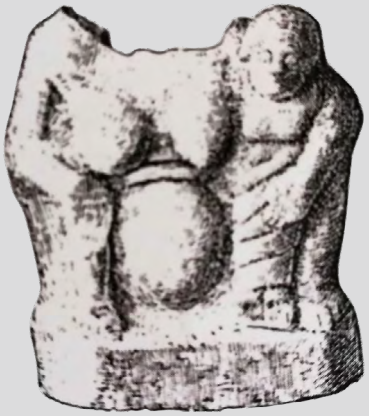

Fig. 23. *Kourophoros* from Lokroi – Lokroi 2 (after Meirano 2018, fig. 1).

26. Lokroi 3

(Fig. 24), moulded terracotta. Lokroi, necropolis in Contrada Lucifero, sporadic. Reggio Calabria, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (MArRC), inv. n. MRC 726 (ex 8001, 4368).
Description: *kourophoros***,** the upper part of an enthroned woman. She is probably holding an infant on her left side. She is looking in the opposite direction. Likely, she is not breastfeeding since her breasts are covered by a V-neck tunic. She is wearing a

Fig. 24. *Kourophoros* from Lokroi – Lokroi 3 (after Meirano 2018, fig. 1).

crown and round ornaments on either side of her face.
Bibliography: Meirano 2018, p. 133.

2.5. *Sicily*

27. Gela 1
(Fig. 25), moulded terracotta, pinkish clay, H 14 cm, W 7,2 cm. Gela, necropolis of Monte Bubbonia. Caltanissetta, Museo Archeologico Regionale, inv. n. MB 35472. Last quarter of the 6th cent. BCE.
Description: *kourotrophos*, a seated woman suckling a big infant at her left breast. The infant is reaching for the woman's right breast with its right hand. The woman is holding it with both hands. She is wearing a tunic and a mantle, which covers her head and partially the infant. She has a hairstyle with strands arranged in a radial shape. Her feet are on a footrest.
Bibliography: Panvini – Sole 2009, II, p. 407, TA/50.

28. Gela 2
(Fig. 26), hand-modeled terracotta, H 9,5 cm. Gela, necropolis of Monte Bubbonia. Syracuse, Museo Archeologico Regionale P. Orsi, inv. n. 24905. 6th cent. BCE.
Description: *kourophoros*, a seated woman with an infant in her arms. The infant has its head on the woman's left arm. She is wearing a veil on her head; she is seated on a cylindric base.
Bibliography: Zuntz 1971, p. 151, pl. 21.d; Hadzisteliou Price 1978, p. 22, fig. 11; Pancucci – Naro 1992, p. 30, cat. 60, pl. VI, n. 9.

29. Gela 3
(Fig. 27), moulded terracotta. Gela, necropolis of Campo Soprano, Tomb 10. Gela, Museo Archeologico Regionale, inv. n. 21134. 480 BCE.
Description: *kourophoros*, an enthroned woman with a big infant enveloped in a big mantle in her lap. She is holding it with both hands; it is represented in the

Fig. 25. *Kourotrophos* from Gela (Monte Bubbonia) – Gela 1 (after Panvini – Sole 2009, II, p. 407, TA/50).

Fig. 26. *Kourophoros* from Gela (Monte Bubbonia) – Gela 2 (after Zuntz 1971, p. 151, pl. 21.d).

Fig. 27. *Kourophoros* from Gela – Gela 3 (after Pedrucci 2022, p. 366).

left profile. She is wearing a tunic and a mantle, which covers her head. She has long hair; the infant has long hair, too. Her feet are on a footrest.
Bibliography: Pedrucci 2022, p. 366.

30. Randazzo 1
(Fig. 28), moulded terracotta. Randazzo, necropolis of Sant'Anastasia. Palermo, Museo Archeologico Regionale A. Salinas, inv. n. 400. Mid-5th cent. BCE.
Description: *kourotrophos*, an enthroned woman suckling a baby at her left breast. She is wearing a plissé tunic and a mantle that covers her head. She has a central parting. The infant is grabbing the woman's left breast with its left hand. Her right hand is on her right knee. Her feet are on a high footrest.
Bibliography: Hadzisteliou Price 1978, p. 29, n. 163, fig. 16.

31. Kentoripa 1
(Fig. 29), moulded terracotta (bivalve mould), yellow clay, traces of whiteish englobe, H 10,2 cm. Kentoripa (Centuripe), necropolis of Contrada Cassino. Syracuse, Museo Archeologico Regionale P. Orsi, inv. n. 27768. Hellenistic period.
Description: *kourotrophos*, a seated woman suckling an infant at her left breast. She is in the left three-quarter profile; she is looking toward the baby. Both the woman and the baby are naked. The infant is grabbing the woman's left breast with its left hand; she is holding her legs with her right hand. Her feet are on a footrest.
Notes: the woman's head was reconstructed.
Bibliography: Musumeci 2010, pp. 44, 46, figs. 1-2.

32. Kamarina 1
(Fig. 30), moulded terracotta (bivalve mould), chamois clay (traces of cream englobe), H 15,5 cm, W 8,2 cm. Kamarina? Necropolis? Catania, Museo Castello Ursino, inv. n. MB 5440, 5441, 5450. End of the 6th cent. BCE.

Fig. 28. *Kourotrophos* from Randazzo – Randazzo 1 (after Hadzisteliou Price 1978, p. 29, n. 163, fig. 16).

Fig. 29. *Kourotrophos* from Kentoripa – Kentoripa 1 (after Pedrucci 2013, p. 330, S67).

Fig. 30. *Kourotrophos* from Kamarina – Kamarina 1 (after Pautasso 1997, p. 40, n. 44, pl. V, inv. n. 5441).

Description: *kourotrophos*, a seated woman suckling a big infant at her left breast. The infant is reaching for the woman's right breast with its right hand. The woman is holding it with both hands. She is wearing a tunic and a mantle, which covers her head and partially the infant. She has a hairstyle with strands arranged in a radial shape. Her feet are on a footrest.
Notes: 3 items.
Bibliography: Pautasso 1997, p. 40, n. 44, pl. V; Panvini – Sole 2009, II, p. 402, TA/38.

33. Kamarina 2
(Fig. 31), moulded terracotta, H 23 cm. Kamarina, necropolis of Passo Marinaro. Ragusa, Museo Archeologico Ibleo, inv. n. 23933. Mid-5th cent. BCE.
Description: *kourophoros*, a standing woman with a frontal infant seated on her left shoulder. She is wearing a tunic and a mantle, which covers her head and the infant's head. Her right arm is bent across the chest; she is holding her left leg with her left arm. She is holding an object with her right hand. She has a central parting. The infant has its hand on its knees.
Notes: found next to an empty (?) sealed amphora along with an *askos* and a small mug.
Bibliography: Orsi – Lanza 1990, p. 30, pl. XII.1.

34. Kamarina 3
(Fig. 32), moulded terracotta (bivalve mould), red-orange clay, H 12,5 cm, W 7,5 cm. Kamarina, necropolis of Passo Marinaro. Camarina, Museo Archeologico Regionale, inv. n. 1818. End of the 6th cent. BCE.
Description: *kourophoros*, an enthroned woman with a big infant enveloped in a big mantle in her lap. She is holding it with both hands; it is represented almost frontally. She is wearing a tunic and a mantle, which covers her head. Her feet are missing.
Bibliography: Panvini – Sole 2009, II, p. 230, VI/162.

Fig. 31. *Kourophoros* from Kamarina – Kamarina 2 (after Orsi – Lanza 1990, p. 30, pl. XII.1).

Fig. 32. *Kourophoros* from Kamarina – Kamarina 3 (after Panvini – Sole 2009, II, p. 230, VI/162).

35. Kamarina 4

(Fig. 33), moulded terracotta, pink clay (with impurities), H 10,5 cm. Kamarina, necropolis of Passo Marinaro. Ragusa, Museo Archeologico Ibleo, inv. n. 24075. Mid-5th cent. BCE.

Description: *kourotrophos*, an enthroned woman suckling a big naked child at her left breast. The head is missing. She is wearing a plissé tunic; she is holding her breast. The child is lying in an extremely "relaxed" position; she is supporting its head with her left hand. Throne with ears. Her feet are on a footrest.

Notes: "Materiale sporadico".

Bibliography: Orsi – Lanza 1990, p. 82f, pl. XLVII, n. 9.

Fig. 33. *Kourotrophos* from Kamarina – Kamarina 4 (after Orsi – Lanza 1990, pl. XLVII, n. 9).

36. Kamarina 5

(Fig. 34), moulded terracotta. Kamarina, necropolis of Passo Marinaro, sporadic finding. Syracuse, Museo Archeologico Regionale P. Orsi, inv. n. 24883. 460 BCE.

Description: *kourophoros*, a standing woman with a frontal naked boy seated on her left shoulder. Its right arm is resting on her head; she is holding its legs with her left arm. She is wearing a tunic with a round neckline. She has a central parting. Her feet are on a round pedestal.

Bibliography: Pedrucci 2022, p. 385.

Fig. 34. *Kourophoros* from Kamarina – Kamarina 5 (after Pedrucci 2022, p. 385).

37. Syracuse 1

(Fig. 35), moulded terracotta, orange-pinkish clay (traces of white englobe and red and blue paint), H 12 cm, Syracuse, Villa Landolina (tombs?). Syracuse, Museo Archeologico Regionale P. Orsi, inv. n. 106120. 5th cent. BCE.

Description: *kourotrophos*, two fragments of a seated woman suckling an infant from her left breast. She is wearing a tunic and a mantle, which covers her head. She is wearing a diadem or blindfold. The breast comes out of the tunic. Probably, the infant is reaching for the woman's left breast with its left hand. The infant

Fig. 35. *Kourotrophos* from Syracuse – Syracuse 1 (after Manenti 2016, fig. 1).

has its back to us; the woman is holding its wrist.
Bibliography: Manenti 2016, pp. 2-4, fig. 1.

38. Akragas 1
(Fig. 36)**,** moulded terracotta (bivalve mould), pink clay, H 16 cm. Akragas, necropolis of Contrada Pezzino. Agrigento, Museo Archeologico Regionale, inv. n. 22607. End of the 6th cent. BCE.
Description: *kourophoros*, an enthroned woman with a big infant enveloped in a big mantle in her lap. She is holding it with both hands; it is represented in her left profile. She is wearing a tunic and a mantle, which probably covers her head. Her head is missing; the infant has long hair. Her feet are on a footrest.
Bibliography: Pedrucci 2013, p. 334, S 81.

39. Akragas 2
(Fig. 37), moulded terracotta (bivalve mould), pink clay, H 17,5 cm. Akragas, necropolis of Contrada Pezzino. Agrigento, Museo Archeologico Regionale, inv. n. 22608. End of the 6th cent. BCE.
Description: *kourophoros***,** an enthroned woman with a big infant enveloped in a big mantle in her lap. She is holding it with both hands; it is represented in her left profile. She is wearing a tunic and a mantle, which covers her head. Her feet are on a footrest.
Bibliography: Pedrucci 2013, p. 334, S 81.

40. Akragas 3
(Fig. 38), moulded terracotta, reddish clay, H 20,3 cm, W 9,5 cm. Cave in Vassallaggi (tomb?). Caltanissetta, Museo Archeologico, inv. n. 9213. 530 ca. BCE.
Description: *kourophoros*, an enthroned woman with a big infant enveloped in a big mantle in her lap. She is holding it with both hands; it is represented frontally. She is wearing a tunic and a mantle, which covers her head. She has long hair with a central parting; the infant has long hair. Her feet are on a footrest.
Bibliography: Panvini – Sole 2009, II, p. 405, TA/46.

Fig. 36. *Kourophoros* from Akragas – Akragas 1 (after Pedrucci 2013, p. 334, S81).

Fig. 37. *Kourophoros* from Akragas – Akragas 2 (after Pedrucci 2013, p. 334, S81).

Fig. 38. *Kourophoros* from Akragas – Akragas 3 (after Pedrucci 2013, p. 335, S82).

41. Akragas 4

(Fig. 39), moulded terracotta, H 9,5 cm, W 6,5 cm. Akragas, necropolis of "Sottogas". Agrigento, Museo Archeologico Regionale, inv. n. 3127.

Description: *kourophoros* a headless enthroned woman with a swaddled infant in her arms. She is holding it with both hands; it is represented in her left profile. She is wearing a tunic with a round neckline and a mantle, which likely covers her head and covers the infant. Her feet are on a footrest.

Bibliography: Pedrucci 2022, p. 371.

Fig. 39. *Kourophoros* from Akragas – Akragas 4 (after Pedrucci 2022, p. 371).

42. Selinous 1

(Fig. 40), moulded terracotta, H 17,8 cm, W 6,3 cm. Selinous, Manicalunga necropolis, sporadic finding. Palermo, Museo Archeologico Regionale A. Salinas, inv. n. 7582/5. End of the 6th-beginning of the 5th cent. BCE (?).

Description: *kourophoros*, a standing woman holding a frontal infant with her left arm. She is wearing a tunic and a mantle, which covers her head and partially the child. The infant has its hands folded on its chest. Very detailed feet.

Bibliography: Pedrucci 2022, p. 376.

Fig. 40. *Kourophoros* from Selinous – Selinous 1 (after Pedrucci 2022, p. 376).

43. Selinous 2

(Fig. 41), moulded terracotta. Selinous, Protoarchaic necropolis. Selinunte, Parco Archeologico, inv. n. 45163. End of the 6th-5th cent. BCE.

Description: *kourotrophos*, a headless enthroned woman suckling a baby at her left breast. She is holding her breast from which the baby is feeding.

Bibliography: Pedrucci 2022, p. 350.

Fig. 41. *Kourotrophos* from Selinous – Selinous 2 (after Pedrucci 2022, p. 350).

44. Selinous 3

(Fig. 42), moulded terracotta (full, without vents), H 7,4 cm, W 2,9 cm. Selinous, Manicalunga necropolis, Tomb 246. Palermo, Museo Archeologico Regionale A. Salinas, inv. n. 7493/3.

Description: *kourotrophos*, a seated woman suckling an infant at her left breast. She is wearing a tunic and a mantle, which covers her head and partially covers the infant's head. The infant is swaddled. She is holding the breast from which the baby is feeding.
Notes: very well-worn. Possibly, the infant is holding the woman's right hand.
Bibliography: Pedrucci 2022, p. 350.

45. Panormo 1
(Fig. 43), moulded terracotta (well-worn mould), pink-orange clay with small micas, H 11 cm. Panormos, Punic necropolis, monolithic sarcophagus C. Palermo, Museo Archeologico Regionale A. Salinas, inv. n. 33744/1. Second half of the 5th cent. BCE.
Description: *kourophoros*, a seated woman holding a frontal swaddled infant against her left side (only the legs are swaddled). She is wearing a tunic and a mantle, which covers her head. She is holding it with both arms. Her feet are on a footrest.
Bibliography: Allegro 1998, p. 344, T6.

46. Panormo 2
(Fig. 44), moulded terracotta, beige-grey clay, H 14,3 cm. Panormos, Punic necropolis, sarcophagus room 7. Palermo, Museo Archeologico Regionale A. Salinas, inv. n. 33722/3. Second half of the 5th cent. BCE.
Description: *kourophoros*, a standing woman holding a frontal partially swaddled infant against her left side (only the legs are swaddled). She is wearing a tunic and a plissé mantle. She is holding a dove with her right hand; the infant is touching the dove with its left hand. She has curly hair (with a veil?); it has a conic bonnet.
Notes: the dove might be connected with the cult of Astarte.
Bibliography: Allegro 1998, p. 345, T10.

Fig. 42. *Kourotrophos* from Selinous – Selinous 3 (after Pedrucci 2022, p. 350).

Fig. 43. *Kourophoros* from Panormo – Panormo 1 (after Allegro 1998, T6).

Fig. 44. *Kourophoros* from Panormo – Panormo 2 (after Allegro 1998, T10).

47. Lipara 1

(Fig. 45), moulded terracotta (unique mould), pinkish clay, H 14,5 cm. Lipara, tr. XXXIX, Tomb 1988. Lipari, Museo Archeologico Regionale L. Bernabò Brea, inv. n. 14598. Mid-4th cent. BCE.

Description: *kourotrophos*, a seated woman breastfeeding an infant. The woman is holding her left breast, which comes out of the tunic; the infant is partially covered by the woman's mantle. She is wearing a tunic and mantle; she is wearing a *stephane*. Feet or a footrest.

Notes: infant's grave. Small lithic sarcophagus; grave goods inside a *pithos.*

Bibliography: Bernabò Brea – Cavalier 1991, p. 46, pl. XXXI, n. 83; *Mater* 2015, p. 407.

Fig. 45. *Kourotrophos* from Lipara – Lipara 1 (after Bernabò Brea – Cavalier 1991, pl. XXXI, n. 83).

48. Lipara 2

(Fig. 46), moulded terracotta (mould for the head, the body is hand-modeled), traces of colors, H 10 cm. Lipara, tr. XXXI, Tomb 1107. Lipari, Museo Archeologico Regionale L. Bernabò Brea, inv. n. 18429. Mid-5th cent. BCE.

Description: *kourotrophos***,** a seated woman with an infant in her lap. The infant is reaching for the woman's left breast with its right hand. The woman is smiling; she has disproportionate and clownish facial features. Her body is also disproportionate.

Notes: girl's grave. It was found together with a doll and gold dust. It is a *unicum* and it might be a toy.

Bibliography: Bernabò Brea – Cavalier – Villard 2001, p. 467, pl. CCXIV, nn. 2, 5; *Mater* 2015, p. 407.

Fig. 46. *Kourotrophos* from Lipara – Lipara 2 (after Bernabò Brea – Cavalier – Villard 2001, p. 467, pl. CCXIV, n. 2).

49. Lipara 3

(Fig. 47), terracotta (mould for the head, the body is hand-modeled), traces of colors, H 8,5 and 8 cm. Lipara, tr. XLV, Tomb 2514. Lipari, Museo Archeologico Regionale L. Bernabò Brea, inv. n. 18429/e and 18429/f. Mid-5th cent. BCE.

Description: *kourophoros*, a woman bathing a baby

Fig. 47. *Kourophoroi* from Lipara – Lipara 3 (after Bernabò Brea – Cavalier – Villard 2001, p. 467, pl. CCXIV, n. 2).

girl. The woman has long hair and a *stephane*.
Notes: girl's grave. They might be toys. Total: 2 items.
Bibliography: *Mater* 2015, p. 406.

50. Lipara 4
(Fig. 48), moulded terracotta (unique mould), pinkish clay with whitish englobe, H 14,5 cm. Lipara, tr. XV, Tomb 247. Lipari, Museo Archeologico Regionale L. Bernabò Brea, inv. n. 357/f. Beginning of the 3rd cent. BCE.
Description: *kourophoros*, a standing woman holding an almost frontal infant with her left arm. She is "protecting" it with her right arm. She is wearing a plissé tunic and a mantle, which covers her head and partially the child but leaves her breasts uncovered. She is wearing a *stephane* and round earrings. Her left foot is on a small round *ara*.
Notes: it is known as "Andromache with Astyanax". A similar statuette (without the head) was found in the area Z3 in front of the walls. It was likely used for ritual and not funerary purposes.
Bibliography: *Mater* 2015, p. 408.

Fig. 48. *Kourophoros* from Lipara – Lipara 4 (after *Mater* 2015, p. 406).

3. Summary and Analysis of the Data

Latium Vetus: 1 KT; **Southern Etruria** (total: 6 items): 1 KT, 3 KT applied on a *kernos*, 1 KP, 1 double KP; **Campania** (total: 9 items): 7 KT from Nola, Cumae, Grigignano (Atella), and Teanum Sidicinum, 2 KP from Pontecagnano; **Magna Graecia** (total: 15 items): 5 KT from Thuriae and Taras, 10 KP from Bauste, Taras, and Lokroi; **Sicily** (total: 27 items): 12 KT from Gela, Randazzo, Kamarina, Kentoripa, Syracuse, Akragas, Selinous, Lipara, 15 KP from Gela, Kamarina, Akragas, Selinous, Panormo, Kamarina.
These quantitative data should be read with a percentage-based approach:

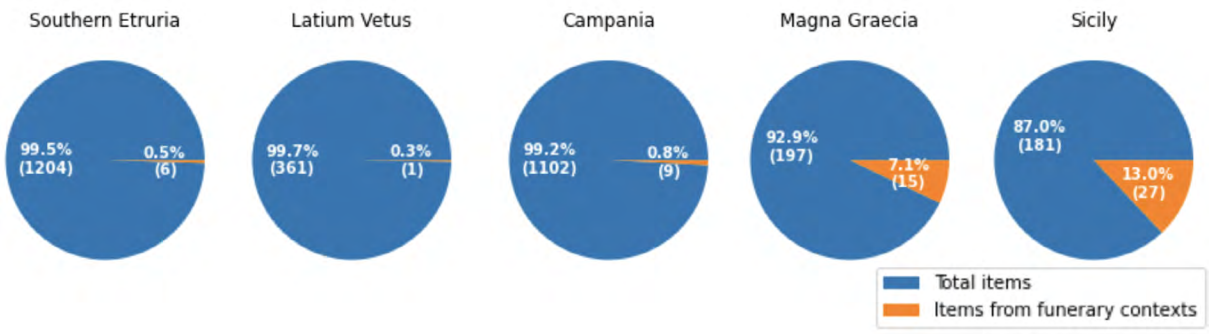

Table 1. Percentage of items from funerary contexts in different regions of ancient Italy (Elaboration by the author).

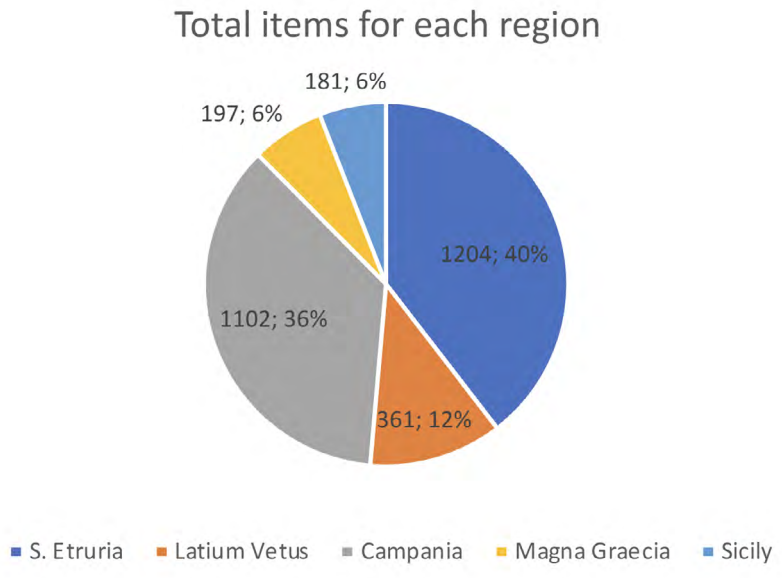

Table 2. Total number of items from different regions of ancient Italy (Elaboration by the author).

The material is very heterogeneous in typology, distribution, dating, and the context of finding is often absent. Typologies are mainly influenced by regional taste while dating is roughly between 4th-3rd century BCE in Southern Etruria, *Latium Vetus*, and Campania, from the Archaic to the Hellenistic period in Magna Graecia, and mainly Archaic (6th-5th century BCE) in Sicily. There is only one couple in Etruria (pairs, both made of a man and a woman and of two women, indeed, are not attested outside Southern Etruria and *Latium Vetus*).

The lack of homogeneity in the distribution is, in my opinion, the most intriguing data. The material from *Latium Vetus* and Southern Etruria, in particular, is extremely sporadic and not particularly significant. The absence of these types of terracottas in funerary contexts, however, is relevant especially if we consider the great abundance of them in votive deposits in these areas.

The number of figurines present in funerary contexts starts to increase as we move south to Campania. They are present not only in female graves (Teanum 1 and Teanum 2), as we might expect, but also, possibly, in a male grave (Nola 1) and in an infant grave of a male individual (Cumae 1). Another data of considerable interest is that the majority are *kourotrophoi*: *kourotrophoi* are usually numerically much less than *kourophoroi*, but this is not the case in Campania where they are attested as much as *kourophoroi* and are more attested than *kourophoroi* in funeral contexts. They all belong to the same typology (Nola 1, Cumae 1, Grigignano 1, Teanum 1, and Teanum 2), which is the most widespread in Campania: a seated woman suckling a baby at her left breast. She is wearing a tunic and a big mantle; she is wearing round earrings. She has shoulder length braids. She is holdings her (uncovered left) breast from which the baby is feeding. Her feet are on a footrest. The naked baby is reaching for the right arm of the woman with its left hand[3].

Magna Graecia is an extraordinarily vast and heterogeneous area. From a quantitative point of view, the statuettes representing *kourotrophoi* and *kourophoroi* in funerary contexts are not frequently attested. It's worth noting, however, that are not very attested also in votive contexts (much less in comparison with Southern Etruria, *Latium Vetus*, and Campania)[4]. Having said so, from Magna Graecia we can gain some interesting details.

The majority comes from Taras but, unfortunately, is devoid of the archeological context and, based on stylistic elements, dates from the Archaic to the Hellenist period. Among this material, there are some very refined statuettes of the Hellenistic period belonging to two following typologies: a standing *kourophoros* with a young girl at her right side; she is holding her hand and looks toward her (Taras 7 and Taras 8); a seated *kourotrophos,* the infant has its back to us; the woman is holding its wrist; the infant can be winged or not winged (Taras 1, Taras 2, Taras 3, and Taras 4).

Winged infants or adolescents are relatively frequent in the funeral context in Southern Italy. They may have been produced as statuettes of Aphrodite and Eros and then used for different purposes. The wings might allude to the soul[5].

[3] Pedrucci 2022, p. 173.
[4] Pedrucci 2022, *passim*.
[5] Guarducci 1985; Hadzisteliou Price 1969. Cfr. Pedrucci 2022, p. 110.

The three figurines from Lokroi are, to my knowledge, *unica* (Lokroi 1, Lokroi 2, and Lokroi 3); Taras 9 is also a *unicum*: and hand-modeled statuette depicting a woman looking after a baby in a cradle with a dog.

Only in three cases, we have information concerning the context of the finding: the two *kourophoroi* from Paestum (Paestum 1) belong to extremely rich female grave goods; the *kourotrophos* from Thuriae (Thuriae 1) was part of the grave goods of a five-year-old girl along with two other statuettes representing a seated woman with a goose on the lap and 19 miniature-sized artifacts[6]; the *kourophoros* from Bauste (Bauste 1) comes from votive deposit related to the burial of an old woman (about 70 years old) and an infant 2–4 years old. The latter apparently belongs to a burial of a grandmother with a grandchild (died at the same time? Died separately?) and might speak of their bond. This detail is of extraordinary interest and could shed new light on the family dynamics in the ancient world and on the recipients and religious agents concerning this type of statuette.

Sicily is, on the one hand, the region with the highest number of *kourotrophoi* and *kourophoroi* from funerary contexts and, on the other hand, the region with the lowest number of these types of terracottas.

Apart from two statuettes with Punic influence from Panormo, the others come from Greek colonies or Hellenized indigenous centers. They mainly date back to the 6th-5th century BCE: much earlier in comparison with the other regions. Two typologies are typical of the island: the standing woman with an infant seated on one of her shoulders (Kamarina 2, Kamarina 5) and the enthroned woman with a big infant enveloped in a big mantle in her lap. The infant has long hair. Because of the infant's and of its long hair, the small figure might be intended to be the deceased with a female deity (Gela 3, Akragas 1, Akragas 2, Akragas 3, Kamarina 3)[7].

Generally speaking, the material is sporadic and completely devoid of context. Kamarina 2 (a woman with a child on her left) was found next to an apparently empty sealed amphora along with an *askos* and a small mug. The two statuettes from the Punic necropolis of Panormos are connected with the sarcophagi of adults.

The material of greatest interest to us is from Lipara. It is extremely important because we know for 4 out of 5 the context of the finding.

3 of the 5 statuettes have a moulded head but hand-modeled body and has possibly never been used as toys; for this reason, it is thought that they belonged to the tombs of young girls. They date back to the mid-5th century BCE. Two represent a woman bathing a little girl (Lipara 3). Infant bathing is considered a very important activity and is carried out primarily by the

[6] It is worth noting that it was found in the area of the city on the plain west of the acropolis. The Apulians used to bury not only *extra* but also *intra muros.* See Ciancio 2008.

[7] Similar statuettes have also been found in the Bruttium in sacred contexts linked to Persephone; in these cases, the connection with the afterlife might be confirmed by the presence of the pomegranate. A statuette of a female figure enthroned with an adult figure probably wrapped in a shroud on her knees comes from Kamarina. All these figurines might belong to a mystical context and therefore have little to do with being a mother to an infant. See Pedrucci 2022, p. 409.

mother or other attachment figures. The other is a polychromatic, disproportionate statuette of a laughing woman with clownish features with an infant in her lap; the infant is reaching for her breast (Lipara 2). To my knowledge, it is a *unicum*. It was found with a doll and gold dust.

A more "classic" *kourotrophos* (mid-4th century BCE) comes from an infant's tomb (Lipara 1). There is also a so-called statuette of Andromache and Astyanax from the Hellenistic period (Lipara 4). It is interesting to note that a very similar statuette was found in a ritual context: this might suggest the reuse of these objects for funerary purposes. A statuette of this type shows a woman (very likely the mother) in angst trying to protect her child from a threat (most likely of death). She is doing so by religious means given the presence of the *ara.*

4. Final Remarks

As already stated, the discovery of statuettes representing adult/s with infant/s in funerary contexts in ancient Italy is sporadic and uneven, therefore definitive and unquestionable data cannot be obtained, but there are regional variables of significant interest. The discovery context is often absent, in particular, the most important data for us is frequently missing: the sex and age of the deceased. One fact, however, that can be deduced is that these figurines were not placed only in burials for adult female individuals (the supposed dead mothers) but also in the funerary goods for infants of both sexes and perhaps also in those of adult males. In this regard, the discovery in Bauste (Apulia) of a *kourophoros* (a seated woman holding an infant with her left arm in an almost vertical position. It is covered by the woman's mantle) in a tomb in which an elderly woman and a child were buried together is very interesting. The recipients, therefore, are very diversified and not necessarily linked to biological motherhood. The agents might have been any person – regardless of gender – linked to the adult or to the infant.

These statuettes were largely found in votive contexts and therefore probably produced for another purpose, then reused or used *ad hoc* as grave goods. We can assume that they ideally represented the child and a woman related to him. Statuettes representing a breastfeeding woman (*kourotrophoi*) might allude to any female connected in some way to the baby and able to breastfeed, primarily the biological mother but also the wet-nurse. They were probably placed in the burial of a biological mother or nurse or breastfed child. Interestingly enough, *kourotrophoi* are the most widespread typology in funerary contexts (and unusually very widespread in votive contexts as well). In the case of statuettes representing a woman holding in various ways one or more infants (*kourophoroi*), they might allude to any of the female figures who took care of the infant / s and were attached to it / them might have been the religious agent: a care-giver within the household, a relative, or even a particularly close neighbor. She might have been a step-mother – if the biological mother had died or been divorced –, or (very possibly) a wet-nurse, even a grand-mother, aunt, or elder sister. All of these figurines may have been placed by any of these female figures, but also a man, the father, or a pedagogue, who understood the importance for the offspring of having

the maternal figure close to him in the ultramundane journey. Another possible function of these figurines in a funerary context might have been that of being placed in a burial X to be brought to the deceased Y: owner of the tomb and recipient of the object could theoretically not be the same person. This obviously multiplies the number of possible agents depositing the object. All these figures may have acted, moreover, on behalf of third parties.

Speaking of the functions of these objects, if put in the graves of infants and adolescents, they very likely speak to us of the will of the mother or of another close female figure to remain somehow next to the child after death. The most likely function of these objects was to overcome mourning through religious means by trying to keep the maternal presence close to the offspring after death, as support, comfort, and concrete help (in the case of breastfeeding). Alternatively, if the deceased is a young girl, they might have been toys, apparently not used. In any case, "maternal training" for girls also passed through playing and these would be toys that, within this context, would allude to a failed motherhood during life and a wish for an otherworldly form of motherhood. In both cases, it would be a form of consolation for those who continue to live without their child[8].

If put in the burial of a mother, the deposed object probably had the function of prolonging her role as a mother after death but also of celebrating the important role of a mother after death. Ideally, the woman would not stop being a mother in death and her offspring remained present near her in some way. It must be said that these are standardized objects created mainly for votive usage, so the child is usually one, but we can understand it as a "synecdoche." Even if the woman had had many children, a statuette with only one would still have been symbolically used, or maybe more statuettes in the same grave (we have seen the case), unless one was rich enough and wanted an object to be commissioned.

If put in someone else's burial, male or female, we can only assume that they speak of the deep bond of affection between the dead and a child.

Looking more specifically at the place where they were found in the various regions of ancient Italy, statuettes representing a woman with infant/s have been found throughout ancient Italy, but they are numerous only in the Latial-Etruscan-Campanian area. In this area, they were offered massively in sanctuaries, especially urban or in any case close to the urban area starting from the 5th century BCE, but especially during the 4th-3rd century BCE, during the so-called Romanization[9]. In Southern Etruria and *Latium Vetus*, in the same sanctuaries where we found figurines of *kourotrophoi* and *kourophoroi*, statuettes of couples with infant/s were also offered. This type of votive performance, therefore, is typical of areas with an Etruscan background and early Romanized. However, this does not apply to Sicily, where the material is mainly archaic and linked to local craftsmanship and / or Greek influences. Indeed, putting this type of statuette in tombs is

[8] Dasen 2004. For maternal training, see Pasche Guignard – Pedrucci 2018.
[9] On the Romanization of Italy (and the "Romanization of Rome") and on the concept of Romanization itself, see Di Fazio 2017, p. 426 and Glinister 2009.

probably something that should be related to the Greek origins of colonies in Magna Graecia and Sicily[10]. As we just saw, in Southern Etruria and *Latium Vetus* the religious usage of these objects was significantly different.

Further south, in the early Hellenized areas, these statuettes are few and are sometimes found inside tombs; this is, in fact, consistent with Greek customs. This might be the reason Campania seems to be somehow "in-between".

The highest number of statuettes in Sicily and in some areas of Magna Graecia might be connected, in addition to customs imported by the Greek colonizers, also to the presence in these areas of female deities connected both with motherhood and with the world of the dead, generically indicated with the Greek names Demeter and Kore / Persephone[11]. The so-called Dea of Simeto might be an expression of these divine local beliefs in the case of Sicily and possibly Bruttium. And perhaps to the usage of burying also inside the city walls in Apulia.

In conclusion, mothering and grief for the death of an infant seem to be relatively explicit in Archaic and Hellenistic Italy in funerary contexts but with clear regional variations. *Kourothrophoi* and *kourophoroi* and their companions are mainly found in urban sanctuaries in Etruria and Latium and are a public affair. Moving south they are found more often in burial contexts and seem more a private expression of grief and resilience. All this material tells us about the importance of infants to many adult figures, not just the mother.

[10] See, e.g., Chidiroglou 2015. It must be said that, generally speaking, most Greek cemeteries have not been published accurately. Interestingly, statuettes of Aphrodite and Eros were also found in the tombs, along with statuettes of women with infant/s. As might be expected, the KTs and KPs in Greece also come from sanctuaries. I quote (p. 100): «female figurines from ancient Greek cities functioned almost as ideograms for various stages of life, rites of passage, and religious ideas». More examples of Aphrodite and Eros (in connection with Dionysus) in female and child burials of the Hellenistic rock-cut chamber tombs from Veroia (Macedonia), see Mavrogonatou 2018. This custom became popular during the Hellenistic period. Moreover, in the (rare) case of theatrical subjects in tombs, the custom of so placing them might be linked to the cult of Dionysos, which is intimately connected with the funerary world and with an eschatological vision of the afterlife, see Ferruzza 2016, p. 95.

[11] Pedrucci 2013, *passim*.

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CLAY FIGURINES REPRESENTING MUSICIANS AND DANCERS IN THE FEMALE WORLD AND CHILDHOOD: TOWARDS AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF MUSICAL AND DANCE PERFORMANCE

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Abstract: Terracotta figurines representing musicians and dance activities are spread across a broad geographical space and a wide chronological spectrum in the ancient world. Yet it is only recently that coroplastic art featuring musical and dance performances has been incorporated into the body of sources and documentation within the fields of archaeology of musical and dance performance. Figurines depicted as grotesques or caricatures seem to recall the noisy performances of ritual reenactments that included masked and costumed musicians and dancers in a sacred setting. These caricatures may have been conceived as souvenirs of particular moments in a given ritual that involved not only girls and children but also singers, dancers, and musicians.

Keywords: Music; Dance; Soundscape; Dancescape; Ancient Musical Instruments.

1. An Overview on the Function of Music and Dance in the Sacred Sphere

As a virtually universal human activity, music and dance making is an essential social and cultural behaviour, playing a fundamental role and providing an indispensable function in rituals and sacred manifestations in almost every ancient society. While the performance of music in the sacred sphere should be considered as an aspect of the actions that contribute to the effectiveness of the ritual, it is also necessary to consider it as more than a mere accompaniment or means of filling various phases of the ceremony with sound: musical practice is an important aspect of rituals through which musical messages are transmitted to an audience within a precise context and sonic event. Indeed, musical performance must not only consider the instruments involved or what the musicians, dancers or singers are accomplishing, but also the relationships between space, performance and environment. Furthermore, the relationship with the audience and the behaviour of the audience itself must be taken into consideration in order to fully understand the role of music and dance in rituals and ceremonies, which have religious and social implications. As an essential presence within the lived sonic experience of cult and as ritualised sound, music (alongside other non-musical sounds) evoked certain sensorial and behavioural responses in both the worshippers who performed and those who listened[1] in a sacred space, where complex soundscapes fully engaged the

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[1] Power 2019, p. 15.

ear of the worshippers: they could hear musical performances of all kinds, utterances, outbursts, and acclamations, the "buzzing noises" of crowds and the sounds of sacrifices, instruments and worshippers.

As two components that are inseparable in the sacred sphere, music and dance strengthened the power of performances. At a time when appropriate individuals acted during events, musical and choral performance in cult could be considered a favourite means of communication with the gods and an offering to the deities completed in the framework of the ritual ceremony. Furthermore, music, sound and voices, as well as natural sounds and sound objects, improved sensory experience and enhanced social interaction through the construction of a sacred environment and sacred soundscape[2]: usually involving highly visual imagery, dramatic sounds and other tactile, olfactory and gustatory stimuli, performance communicates on multiple sensory levels[3].

Regarding Greek ceremonies, ritual activity took place in a special location, the sanctuary, which was deemed closer to the other world and distant from this world[4]; this setting produced a sensorial and behavioural response in worshippers and a feeling of connectedness. The figural decoration of sacred architecture, along with all the images related to cult – including terracotta figurines –, may have contributed to achieving the goal of ritual performances using music, dance, sacred verbal formulas and the offerings of material gifts to the gods to induce a sense of the numinous in the participants. Thanks to their low cost, the terracotta figurines representing musicians and dancers made for perfect religious offerings. Indeed, people who took part in musical and dance performances customarily dedicated personal objects to divinities[5]. From this perspective, terracotta figurines provide strong visual evidence of various acts of worship and rituals involving music and dance performances. In many cases, the figurines are the only visual documentation of musical and choral performances in cults and rituals[6].

2. Terracotta Figurines as Material Evidence of Musical and Dance Performances

Clay figurines representing musicians, dancers, and singers are spread across a broad geographical space and a wide chronological spectrum in the ancient world. However, it is only recently that these terracotta figurines have been included in the body of sources and documentation for investigating ancient music and dance performances[7]. Moreover, taking into account the contexts of their discovery, the study of these figurines have enabled the understanding of their functions in sacred contexts as well as in domestic and funerary spheres: they serve as valuable pieces of evidence

[2] Miles 2016, p. 185.
[3] Bell 1997, pp. 159-164.
[4] Marconi 2007, p. 28.
[5] Angliker 2018, p. 32.
[6] Bellia 2016, pp. 191-192.
[7] Bellia – Marconi 2016, *passim*.

not only for the comprehension of their function in religious and social practices, but also for enriching our understanding of musical and dancing activities in daily life of the past. Through an anthropological approach to the study of archaeological evidence which places musical and dance performances within an actual or symbolic space, the survey on figurines representing musicians, dancers, and singers is an indispensable subject of investigation: their study can shed light on ritual meanings and the social function of sonic events in antiquity as well as on the role of music, sounds, and body movements in the life cycle.

The figurines representing lively musical and dancing activities could recall a sacred setting during seasonal feasts, which often involved the active participation of worshippers. An example is offered by the figurines of female and male musicians from sanctuaries in Sicily and in Magna Graecia, dating from the 6th to the 3rd centuries BCE. They are emblematic of a change in musical and dancing performances on the island, which occurred in close association with drama and related to a range of gods including Demeter, Dionysos, Aphrodite, and Apollo[8]. These figurines, some of which were found in theatrical places in connection with shrines, show female musicians who are singing and dancing, and playing wind, stringed, and percussion instruments[9]. These terracottas may represent musical and dancing activities and sonic events performed by professionals and non-professionals in a cultic context[10]. Moreover, these figurines hightlight the way music, sound, and ritualised movements were closely aligned with ceremonies involving rites of passage and initiation, nuptial rites, and rituals of social transformation. These sacred occasions were privileged moments for the consecration and dedication of the statuettes to the divinities that ensured these passages.

3. Some Considerations on the Representations of Musical Instruments

An interesting issue raised by figurines representing musicians, dancers, and singers concerns not only what music and playing music and dance meant for ancient societies, but also which musical instruments were best suited to the diverse array of ritual occasions. These terracotta figurines help us to understand the functions of particular instruments in different religious spheres and ceremonies. Generally, such instruments are depicted being played, but they also are often merely held in the hand, functioning as attributes or sacred objects with the ability to enter into relationships with the gods[11]. In this regard, wind, stringed, and percussion instruments have specific roles associated with certain religious spheres and ceremonies[12]: the depictions of these instruments in the terracottas may shed light on what types of music were performed during particular ritual occasions.

[8] Bosher 2013, pp. 111-121. See also Kowalzig 2008, pp. 128-157.
[9] Bellia 2009, pp. 157-175.
[10] Bellia 2014b, pp. 26-29.
[11] Carboni – Giuman 2015, *passim*.
[12] Bellia 2015b.

Percussion instruments marked time, underlined rhythmic and metrical patterns of music[13], and produced an exciting sound to accompany the rhythmic movements particularly connected with cults and rituals[14]. For this reason, the depiction of percussion instruments must be connected to the widespread function of music being closely related to dancing movements. Moreover, the main functions of figurines holding percussion instruments seem to involve music and dance performed during rituals of socialisation and integration; these instruments conveyed a strong symbolic meaning related to these rituals, in which boys and girls were admitted into the society of adults[15].

However, musicians playing wind instruments are depicted most frequently, because these instruments accompanied the processions to sacred places. Indeed, wind instruments were played during sacrificial rituals and dances performed at ceremonies that required a large number of performers, who were not necessarily professionals. Some figurines featuring wind instruments are depicted as grotesques or caricatures. The latter figurines seem to recall the noisy performances of ritual reenactments that included masked and costumed actors (Fig. 1)[16]. Moreover, the caricatures of these musicians may refer to special instrument players who were rumoured in popular belief to possess supernatural sexual powers (Fig. 2)[17]. It is worth noting that, especially regarding grotesque figurines representing *aulos* players – the instrument that embodied the true festival spirit and

Fig. 1. Antiquarium of Himera, inv. n. HA 2460. 4th-3rd century BCE (after Bellia 2009, p. 58, n. 72).

Fig. 2. Regional Archaeological Museum of Gela, inv. n. 8403. 5th century BCE (after Bellia 2009, p. 43, n. 43).

[13] Saura-Ziegelmeyer 2021, *passim*.
[14] Bellia 2022a, pp. 118-120; Ferri 2022, pp. 14-16.
[15] The clay statuettes from the sanctuary of Kharayeb, located in southern Lebanon, are a remarkable example. See Castiglione 2020, pp. 106-108.
[16] Bellia 2009, p. 58, n. 72.
[17] Bellia 2009, p. 43, n. 43.

accompanied the processional approach to the shrine –, we can assume that this wind instrument soundmarking served to bond the worshipping group closely together as well as accompany dances, deepening perceptual sympathies between members and heightening collective feelings of euphoria and enthusiasm. Moreover, grotesque terracottas representing caricatures of female *aulos* players in particular could be related to musical and dance activities performed during rituals associated with the female world and childhood.

4. Musical and Dance Performances at the Time of Leaving Childhood: The Case of the Sanctuary of Fontana Calda

Terracotta figurines highlight the importance of music and sound in the sphere of childhood and in the female world[18]. Examples of these figurines are the dolls playing *krotala*[19] and the nude female figurines of young girls holding *kymbala* on their legs (Fig. 3)[20]. These figurines, which seem to reproduce the image of young girls, with slightly marked hips and breasts and a flat stomach, were found in the sanctuary of Fontana Calda where[21], from the Archaic Age, there was an important cult of the Nymphs and Artemis, and a connection with female divinities and water sources[22].

Fig. 3. Regional Archaeological Museum of Gela, without inv. n. 4th century BCE (after Bellia 2009, p. 43, n. 449).

Fontana Calda is a locality near Butera, a few kilometres north of Gela, where the "Sicana" Omphake could be placed[23]. In the autumn of 1951, the archaeologist Dinu Adamesteanu discovered a votive deposit belonging to a sanctuary located outside the old town centre, but still connected to it[24]. The place of worship, situated under the rock of Butera that overlooks Fontana Calda, is dominated by two cliffs between which flows the torrent Comunelli. Adamestanu's excavations were on the eastern bank of the torrent, in a vineyard where, at the foot of a retaining wall built to restrict any sliding of the land, he found fragments of statuettes and terracottas[25].

Traces of burning on some of the finds from the votive deposit made Adamesteanu think that there must have been a rural shrine

[18] Bellia 2015a, pp. 14-34; 2021, pp. 71-84.
[19] de' Siena 2009, pp. 53-58; Bianchi 2012, pp. 27-32; Carè – Scilabra 2013, pp. 93-97.
[20] Bellia 2009, p. 43, n. 44.
[21] Bellia 2009, pp. 124-125, nn. 310-312.
[22] Bellia 2009, pp. 113-127. See also, Pizzi 2012, pp. 221-234; Parisi 2017, p. 300.
[23] Adamesteanu 1994-1995, pp. 109-117; Orlandini 1961, pp. 145-149.
[24] Adamesteanu 1954, p. 467; 1958; Guzzone 1998; 2003.
[25] Portale 2008, pp. 9-11.

and that the site, being outside the town and near the stream, might have been dedicated to a cult associated with water as long ago as the 7th century BCE[26]. A large quantity of coroplastic material comes from the votive deposit, most of which was produced locally, from the 6th to the 3rd centuries BCE[27]. This production was at its height between the second half of the 4th and the beginning of the 3rd centuries BCE.

Given the discovery of more than one hundred female musical instrument players and dancers in this sanctuary, as well as the nuptial connotations of the other objects found there, these terracotta figurines seem to highlight how sounds and rhythmical movements were closely alligned with ceremonies involving rites of passage and initiations, as well as nuptial rites and rituals of social transformation involving offerings of objects related to girlhood. In this context, the female figurines holding *kymbala* – which, like *tympana*, were percussion instruments particularly suitable to accompany the dances and ritualised movements of young girls – not only had a ludical and educational function, but also a sacral and initiatory meaning. These figurines could be toy figurines with an educative function in a ludic frame which aimed to support the socialisation of girls[28]. Thus, evoking the end of childhood games of girls ready for marriage, the offering of figurines holding percussion instruments could also suggest a relationship with the *choroi* of girls who, still maidens, danced accompanied by the rhythm of percussion instruments, exposing themselves to the admiration of young males. The figurines holding *kymbala* in particular may be interpreted as effigies of the maiden and of the nubile female: the female figurines playing a percussion instrument suitable for accompanying the dance of young girls may be seen as a visual reference to a key theme, namely the chorus maidens at the flower of their youth who danced in honour of deities by offering them not only their musical performance, but also their instruments, before marriage. The clay female players seem to evoke ritual acts in sacred places, where young girls took part in offerings in honour of the divinities at the time of leaving childhood.

As written sources state, the custom of dedicating musical instruments and sound toys as *aparché* during wedding ceremonies, sometimes with a doll (the net holding back the hair) and the ball (at times itself a rattle containing a little stone)[29], symbolises the passage to a new status in the adult world. An example is offered by the well-known epigram in the *Palatine Anthology*[30], which mentions the prenuptial offering of *Timarete* to Artemis, the patroness deity of the female transition phases. The percussion instrument and the other objects dedicated by *Timarete* are associated with adolescence. Their dedication to Artemis signifies for the young girl the end of childhood and, probably at the same time, the transition to adulthood through marriage.

[26] Adamesteanu 1958, p. 611.
[27] Bellia 2009, pp. 113-127.
[28] Sabetai 2022, pp. 161-166.
[29] Bellia 2012, pp. 19-25; 2022b, pp. 191-194.
[30] *Anth. Pal.*, VI.280.

In the sanctuary of Fontana Calda, several clay single figurines of female instrument players (Fig. 4)[31] and plaques representing three girls performing music and dance have also been found (Fig. 5)[32]; other figurines of female *aulos* players are wearing masks (Fig. 6)[33], and are dressed in jewellery and transparent clothes[34]. According to the types of these depictions, the *choroi* depicted on the clay plaques were formed variously by three maidens who dance and play wind and percussion instruments. These two-dimensional representations, which impart a general impression of a dance movement, seem to be the replacement for the clay circular models of dancers[35]. These figurines help us to understand the different roles of the female musicians and dancers depicted in the terracotta *choroi*[36].

Fig. 4. Regional Archaeological Museum of Gela, inv. n. 6333. 5th century BCE (after Bellia 2009, p. 114, n. 255).

Fig. 5. Regional Archaeological Museum of Gela, inv. n. 6376. 4th century BCE (after Bellia 2009, p. 126, n. 315).

Fig. 6. Regional Archaeological Museum of Gela, inv. n. 6345. 4th century BCE (after Bellia 2009, p. 122, n. 298).

[31] Bellia 2009, pp. 114-126, nn. 255-314; pp. 126-127, nn. 315-320.
[32] Bellia 2009, p. 122, n. 298.
[33] Bellia 2009, p. 122, n. 298; cfr. p. 44, nn. 46-47.
[34] See, Larson 2001, pp. 114-115.
[35] Liveri 2009, pp. 2-6; Albertocchi 2014, pp. 237-248; 2015, pp. 13-15.
[36] Bellia 2012, pp. 115-119.

Detailed identification of the terracotta figurines representing musicians provides important information about the type/kind of instruments that were used in the particular rituals celebrated in the sanctuary of Fontana Calda. Whilst percussion instruments were chosen to represent the exciting noise accompanying the rhythmic gestures made by the dancers, the musicians were predominantly depicted playing the *aulos*, since this was the instrument most likely to have accompanied the processions and dances in (or, to) the sacred place. On the clay plaques, the *auletris* is shorter than the other figurines playing instruments and/or dancing; her role therefore seems secondary in the representations. The female figurines without any musical instruments probably represent singers; the dancers are most often depicted playing the *tympanon* with accompanying body movements. It is interesting to note that this percussion instrument is also depicted on vases discovered in the sanctuary where girls wearing jewellery and transparent clothes, and holding a large *tympanon*, are represented[37].

On the basis of the archaeological evidence, the exact nature of the dance itself remains unknown, as no amount of inference will ever recreate the dance exactly as it was practised. However, it is worth mentioning that the circular dance embodies two fundamental moments in the maidens' lives[38]: rituals of initiation into puberty and marriage, encompassing all the stages from the maiden's first encounter with her prospective groom to the wedding celebration. It seems that the circular dance in a collective performance was considered an ideal moment to display the qualities of girls who were preparing to leave their family home to join the groom's *oikos*. Dance was an integral part of ritual performances that marked stages and transitional phases of life, such as the initiation of girls into adult maturity and marriage[39], and that enabled girls and young women to be seen in public at a time when they were most graceful and attractive[40].

The dancing female groups found in the sanctuary of Fontana Calda seem to evoke music and sounds for the wedding of the archetypal bride, perhaps recalling local marriage customs in Magna Graecia and in Sicily[41]. The rendering of this dance in choral performance groups of young girls creates a focus on the group: they might not be a generalised grouping of girls, but a specific community of female adolescents on the brink of marriage. The terracotta plaques from the sanctuary of Fontana Calda exhibit close parallels with examples from the sanctuaries near the water sources of San Biagio at Agrigento (Fig. 7)[42], the Hellenistic Fountain at Morgantina[43], the Caruso cave at Locri (Fig. 8)[44], and those at Reggio Calabria (Fig. 9)[45] and Lipari (Fig. 10)[46]. These parallels also seem to have nuptial connotations and a connection with female divinities and water sources.

[37] Portale 2008, p. 45, fig. 48.
[38] Smith 2011, pp. 88-93.
[39] Calame 2001, pp. 34-43.
[40] Shapiro 2004, pp. 310-311.
[41] Bell 1981, pp. 92-93; Larson 2001, p. 220; Bellia 2012, pp. 150-152.
[42] Bellia 2009, pp. 32-33, n. 28.
[43] Bell 1987, p. 117, pl. XXXVIII, fig. 2.
[44] Bellia 2014a, p. 24, fig. 4; Bellia forthcoming.
[45] Bellia 2014b, p. 44, fig. 18.
[46] Bellia 2009, pp. 70-86, nn. 100-166.

As with Fontana Calda, the cults of Persephone and Aphrodite were closely intertwined in these sanctuaries. Aphrodite's cult begins to be well attested in Magna Graecia and Sicily around the time that the nude 'nuptial' terracotta figures appear[47]. In many cases, these terracotta figurines incorporate the same nuptial gesture of holding their dresses (Fig. 11)[48] and/or of *anakalypsis* with one of the figurines depicted dancing in the *choros*: it is a ritual act during which the bride unveils her face in front of her husband. Through this gesture, performed during the nuptial rites, the maidens showed their readiness for sexual maturity and welcomed the new status of the bride[49].

Fig. 7. Regional Archaeological Museum of Syracuse, inv. n. 16097. 4th century BCE (after Bellia 2009, pp. 32-33, n. 28).

Fig. 8. National Archaeological Museum of Reggio Calabria, inv. nn. 128 and 587/129. 4th century BCE (after Bellia 2014a, p. 24, fig. 4).

[47] Costabile 1991, pp. 114-127; Sabbione – Schenal 1996; MacLachlan 2009, pp. 204-207.
[48] Bellia 2009, p. 122, nn. 299-301.
[49] Pautasso 2008, pp. 285-291.

Fig. 9. National Archaeological Museum of Reggio Calabria, inv. n. 399. 4th century BCE (after Bellia 2014b, p. 44, fig. 18).

Fig. 10. Regional Archaeological Museum of Cefalù, inv. n. 140. 4th century BCE (after Bellia 2009, p. 75, n. 118).

Fig. 11. Regional Archaeological Museum of Gela, inv. n. 6330. 4th century BCE (after Bellia 2009, p. 122, n. 299).

5. Some Final Thoughts

The choral dance featuring multiple performers moving in unison, and their synchronicity, is an important element of the aesthetic impact of ritualised dancing movements[50]. The presence of these dancing groups expresses the essential nature of ritualised movements in performance and in defining the space of rituals as a dancescape[51]: the depiction of dancing groups serves as an invitation to the audience to engage with special gestures within a well-defined place. Overall, these terracotta representations highlight how sounds and rhythmical movement were closely aligned with ceremonies involving rites of passage and initiations, as well as nuptial rites and broader rituals of social transformation performed in a sacred place. During these wedding celebrations, almost every element could be accompanied by musical and dance performances and sonic events.

Clay figurines representing musicians and dancers related to the female world and childhood (some of which are grotesque terracottas representing caricatures of musical, dancing, and singing performers, including female and male musicians), are not simply dedications and material objects, but dynamic and expressive products of human musical behaviour in worship. These depictions may have been conceived as souvenirs of particular moments in a given ritual that involved not only priests, priestesses, and/or cult personnel, but also singers, dancers, and musicians. Thus, it is necessary to consider the representations of musical instruments and their relationship with the religious sphere on a case-by-case basis, while keeping in mind the "polysemic"[52] nature of clay figurines representing musicians, the different uses of the same representations for different sacred occasions, and, when possible, the differing archaeological contexts within which the statuettes were found. Making the link between sacred events and musical performances during celebrations would be the key to understanding the symbolic meanings and the rich production of clay figurines representing musicians, dancers, and singers in the ancient world.

[50] Olsen 2021, p. 28.
[51] Naerebout 2017, pp. 39-40.
[52] Huysecom-Haxhi – Muller 2015b, pp. 426-428.

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PARTHENOI FROM GREEK SICILY. THE VISUAL IMAGERY BETWEEN COROPLASTIC ART AND LYRIC IN THE ARCHAIC PERIOD

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Abstract: The representation of young maidens (*korai*) and the symbols that enhance their status and characteristics are recurring features in Archaic Greek art and craft. This paper deals with Archaic figurative terracottas, focusing on standing female figures. The aim is to highlight the indicators that are often overlooked when reading a figurative terracotta. The discourse starts from the iconographic types of the Archaic production of Greek Sicily. They are characterized by elements and indicators that respond to the needs of local religious demand and a precise ritual sphere. The representations of young maidens in their prime, often bearing an attribute with a strong symbolic meaning, are material expressions of a precise "mentality" or, perhaps better, of a representative strategy of a specific age group, that of the *parthenoi*. Comparisons with similar representations in sculpture and figured pottery are often used to understand the meaning of these images. However, in order to fully grasp the symbolic value of these images, one must turn to the intangible (non-material) sources, i.e. the mentality and social and ritual habits conveyed by the Archaic lyrics. In fact, this literary genre uses a visual language that finds a material equivalent in the representations of *parthenoi* in various media. A parallel reading of the terracotta images of young maidens and the descriptions of *parthenoi* in Archaic Greek lyric poetry allows us to contextualize the reasons for some iconographic choices within a broader visual culture.

Keywords: Archaic Greece; Iconography; *parthenoi*; Archaic Lyrics; Age Groups.

«οἵαν τὰν ὐάκινθον ἐν ὤρεσι ποίμενες ἄνδρες
πόσσι καταστείβοισι, χάμαι δέ τε πόρφυρον ἄνθος»[1]

1. Foreword

The large votive deposits of Sicily and Magna Graecia are unique research laboratories in terms of quantity and typological variety, as well as diachronic extension, and provide remarkable contributions to the interpretation of figurative terracottas in context[2]. The present paper brings

* Institute of Heritage Science, CNR; antonella.pautasso@cnr.it. I would like to thank Ida Oggiano and Marianna Castiglione for inviting me to participate in the workshop. It was a stimulating opportunity to share research carried out in different chronological and spatial domains. The photos of the terracotta figurines from the Catania deposit are part of the Archive of the ISPC CNR and they have been published according the kind permission of the Parco Archeologico e Paesaggistico di Catania e della Valle dell'Aci.

[1] Sapph. fr. 105b V.

[2] For an updated overview of the main votive deposits of Sicily and Magna Graecia, see Parisi 2017.

together several observations made during the study of the figurative terracottas from the large votive deposit in Piazza San Francesco in Catania[3], concerning a specific iconographic group, that of the Archaic figures of standing maidens, with or without attributes. They are generally images of young women (or maidens) in their prime. In such images, the physical appearance is fundamental and the various features – body, posture, dress – emphasise the femininity of the figure. They have been found in many votive deposits in Sicily and Magna Graecia – although not always in such large numbers as in Catania – and have often been considered, both in the past and in recent studies, as "indeterminate" or "generic" female iconographies, because they often lack specific indicators that are useful for characterizing the figure. When they do bear attributes, these are generally considered to be offerings to the titular deity of the sanctuary or markers useful in identifying the deity itself.

In fact, as we shall see, both the figure and the attribute, if any, are fundamental elements of figurative codes that express the identity of the dedicator or the person in whose behalf the object is dedicated. A few years ago, I stressed the need to read these images in their semantic unity, taking into account the body, the dress and the attribute. In this paper, a different approach to the same problem is developed in an attempt to gain new insights useful for a better reading of the "votive system" of the "caso di *Katane*". In particular, a parallel reading of the terracotta images of young maidens and the descriptions of *parthenoi* in Archaic Greek lyric poetry is proposed, with the aim of contextualizing the reasons for some iconographic choices within a wider visual culture. Since the subject is broad and full of insights, the discussion will only consider a few examples and refer mainly to the works of two poets: Alcman and Sappho, with a few references to other poets.

2. Figurative Terracottas in Context

The events that led to the discovery of the context of Piazza San Francesco are well known and have been widely published[4]. However, it is worth briefly recalling that the so-called "deposit" of *Katane* – actually several deposits found along an excavation trench and probably related to cleaning and disposal operations carried out in the sacred area at different times – is one of the most extensive in the western Mediterranean. It consists of several tens of thousands of fragments and whole pieces, divided between pottery and coroplastic finds. The material dates from the beginning of the sixth century BCE and covers most of the fourth century BCE. One of the most characteristic aspects of the Archaic phase of the deposit is the impressive quantity of moulded statuettes and figurines representing standing maidens, with or without attributes[5], an aspect that has no parallel in other large votive deposits of the same period in Greek Sicily, such as Bitalemi[6]. Some of these

[3] For the context, see *infra*.
[4] For the discovery and the composition of the deposits found in Piazza San Francesco in 1959, see especially Rizza 1960; Pautasso 2010.
[5] Pautasso in preparation.
[6] For the Archaic phase of the Bitalemi sanctuary, in general: Albertocchi 2002a; for the Archaic coroplastic finds from

are imports from eastern Greece, but the most consistent and typologically varied core consists of locally produced figurines[7]. These are often of considerable height, between 30 and 50 cm, and in a few cases even more, which makes it possible to appreciate certain details that are lost in the current production of smaller figurines[8].

3. Between Archaic Lyrics and Figurative Terracottas: Visual Imagery and Material Culture

In recent decades, particular attention has been paid to the study of the image, i.e. the interpretation of the iconography of figurative terracottas, often through the relationship between the images expressed in clay and the representations in other media, especially in coeval ceramics and sculpture. This approach has been, and continues to be – see, for example, the fundamental contribution of Arthur Muller and Stephanie Huysecom-Haxhi[9] – relevant for embedding the different iconographic types of figurative terracottas in a network of images useful for their interpretation. However, since figurative terracottas are a by-product of the social and cultural milieu in which they were commissioned, produced, used, dedicated and viewed, in order to fully grasp the symbolic value of these images, one must turn to the intangible (non-material) sources, i.e. social and ritual habits as well as the Archaic mentality as conveyed by the Archaic lyrics. In fact, this literary genre uses a visual language that finds its material equivalent in the representation of various iconographic types of terracotta figurines.

This approach, which interweaves text and image to shed light on certain aspects of the Greek mentality, was also adopted by Stieber in her book on the marble Attic Korai[10], although the author often refers to some later sources (mainly from the Classical period) rather than to the Archaic texts. Some of the scholar's observations can also be considered valuable for the terracotta figurines, but the discussion can be further extended by the insights provided by important philological and anthropological works. Among these, the seminal work of Calame[11] and some important recent contributions on visual imagery in Archaic lyric poetry[12] are worth mentioning.

3.1. Parthenoi *in the Coroplasty of Greek Sicily: Reading the Images through Archaic Lyrics*

As previously stated, the figurative terracottas that are the subject of this paper represent young maidens in their prime; in them the physical appearance is fundamental and the various elements,

the Geloan sanctuary, see Albertocchi 2022b; Bertesago 2022.
[7] On the local production of figurative terracottas in Archaic *Katane*, see Pautasso 2012; Pautasso *et al*. 2022.
[8] See, for example, Pautasso 2021.
[9] See, for example, Huysecom-Haxhi – Muller 2007.
[10] Stieber 2004, in particular pp. 114-140.
[11] Calame 1997.
[12] In particular, see Cazzato – Lardinois 2016 (collecting many contributions on this topic).

body, posture, clothing, emphasise the femininity of the figure. Generally referred to as *korai*, they represent a specific age group, that of the unmarried young women on the threshold of marriage[13]. The transition from childhood to adulthood is known to be a crucial moment of great physical and psychological change for both sexes. For girls, the Greeks used the term *parthenos* to indicate a precise stage of biotic development[14]. «Being a parthenos», as Swift wrote, «is not a perpetual state but rather one which automatically looks towards a change. At the hearth of the *parthenos*' identity leis a paradox: she is attractive precisely because she is not yet a mature and married woman, yet it is also her capacity to undergo that transition which makes her desirable»[15].

What characterizes these clay statuettes is a young, florid body whose forms shine through the clothing (Fig. 1), prominent breasts, an exuberant physicality that is an expression of the physical changes we have all experienced. Youth and physical beauty, as well as the most important signs of female strenght have obvious implications for a woman's capacity to give children. Physical beauty and sexual desirability are the characteristics of the *parthenoi* in the various fragments we have, expressed in the lyric through metaphors. Images of shining and of precious metal are a conventional way of praising female beauty[16].

The convention of depicting Archaic standing female statuettes in a certain posture is entirely in keeping with this. In fact, they are usually depicted in the act of taking a light step (Fig. 2), with one foot in front of the other (usually the left in front of the right one). This convention - which is by no means a mere figurative convention – has a specific counterpart in contemporary literature: a maiden who knows how to walk walks with light steps, only partially displaying her ankles, which have a specific erotic value[17]. Thus, Sappho and Alcman sings the praises of the thin ankle of the *parthenoi*: τ' ἅμα παρθενίκα[ν] τ..[..].σφύρων (Sapph. fr. 44, 15 Voigt); οὐ γάρ ἀ κ[α]λλίσφυρος Ἀγησιχ[ό] ρ[α] πάρ'αὐτεῖ (Alcm. *PMGF* 1, 78-79); or Sappho praises the light step: ἔρατόν τε βᾶμα (Sapph. fr. 16, 17). These verses are in

Fig. 1. Standing female statuette from the votive deposit of piazza San Francesco (CT), inv. n. K 541 (photo Archive ISPC CNR).

[13] Brulé 1998 addressed the issue of the terminology related to the definition of the age of girls, as a translation of Greek terms, into French and English.
[14] In general, on the status of *parthenos*, see Lefkowitz 1995; Bruit-Zaidman 1996; Calame 1997, pp. 26-28; Bodiou 2009; Brelich 2013, especially pp. 304-315.
[15] Swift 2016, p. 282.
[16] See, for example Alcm. *PMGF* 1, 39-43 (a *parthenos*, Agido is described shining like the sun); 50-57 (another one, Hagesichora, has golden hair and a silver face).
[17] On the topic, Stieber 2004, pp. 117-129.

Fig. 2. Standing female statuette from the votive deposit of piazza San Francesco (CT), inv. n. K 492 (photo Archive ISPC CNR).

contrast with the description of a hateful woman with thick ankles, made by Archilocus: περὶ σφυρὸν παχεῖα, μισητὴ γυνή (Archil. fr. 206)[18].

The light step is also determined by the length of the chiton, which the maidens pull aside with one hand, sometimes lifting it slightly to reveal only the ankles, but highlighting the forms beneath the fabric[19]. In this gesture lies the maiden's grace (*charis*), a quality that makes her desirable, unlike the rustic woman, mentioned in a fragment by Sappho, who does not know how to lift her dress above her ankle: τίς δ' ἀγροΐωτις θέλγει νόον... / ἀγροΐωτιν ἐπεμμένα στόλαν... / οὐκ ἐπισταμένα τὰ βράκε' ἔλκην ἐπὶ τὼν σφύρων; (Sapph. fr. 61D).

The way of wearing the hair is not the same for all the statuettes of *parthenoi*. The hairstyle can vary from one type to another, but the common feature is a mass of long, unbound hair that covers the shoulders (Fig. 3.a-b)[20]. Unbounding or shaking the hair in the *choròs* are gestures with a strong erotic charge: they indicate a premarital state (μά]λιστα κόμ[αν ξ]ανθὰν τινάξω· Alcm. *PMGF* 3, 9). Hair will be bound after marriage and sometimes locks cut and dedicated to the deity with other objects connected to the childhood as a bridal dedication[21].

Fig. 3. a-b. Examples of unbound hair of female statuettes from the votive deposit of piazza San Francesco (CT), inv. nn. K 550, K 1924 (photo Archive ISPC CNR).

In a passage from Euripides' Iphigenia among the Taurians (1143-1152), the protagonist mentions her luxurious hair, with long tresses, and the rich garments she wore when she participated as *parthenos* in wedding choruses (χοροῖς δ'

[18] See also E. *Hel.* 1570 (εὐσφύρος ποδός); Sapph. fr. 103, 5 (εὔπους, in reference to a bride).
[19] Stieber 2004, p. 121.
[20] Stieber 2004, pp. 133-134.
[21] Oakley – Sinos 1993, p. 14 for the offering of hair locks at the wedding. For the gift to Artemis Limnatis of the objects connected to the childhood, see for example the Timarete's epigram in the *AP*. 6, 280.

ἐνσταίην, ὅθι καὶ / †παρθένος εὐδοκίμων γάμων / παρὰ πόδ' εἰλίσσουσα φίλας / ματέρος, ἡλίκων θιάσους / ἐς ἀμίλλας χαρίτων / ἀβροπλούτοιο χαίτας εἰς ἔριν / ὀρνυμένα πολυποίκιλα φάρεα / καὶ πλοκάμους περιβαλλομένα / γένυσιν ἐσκίαζον†).

Indeed, clothing distinguishes the performative occasions of the *parthenos*, the participation in the *choroi*, whether related to religious, civic or wedding events, as well as the splendour and luxury of the accessories[22]. In this sense, the particular attention paid by the craftsmen of *Katane* to the details of the garments (Fig. 4), with a wide variety of solutions among the different types, and the presence of precious ornaments (Fig. 5), recall the description of the *choros* in the first Parthenaic fragment by Alcman[23].

Fig. 4. Detail of the chiton on the shoulder of a standing female figurines from the votive deposit of piazza San Francesco (CT), inv. n. K 1944 (photo Archive ISPC CNR).

Fig. 5. Detail of a bangle shaped like a snake on a standing female figurine from the votive deposit of piazza San Francesco (CT), inv. n. K 6900 (photo Archive ISPC CNR).

This sphere of female physical display also includes the so-called attributes, objects brought by the *parthenoi* which, far from being offerings to the deity, are part of a symbolic language focused on the main quality of maidens: virginity (which in Greek is precisely indicated by the term *parthenia*[24]). Around this quality, which is an essential prerogative for the *parthenos* to become *nymphe*, i.e. bride, turns a series of symbols that form part of a deep-rooted cultural idea widespread

[22] For the importance of clothing at different stages of female life, see Lee 2012, especially pp. 186-188.
[23] Especially vv. 64-81 with reference to clothes (purple) and jewels (a bangle shaped like a coiled snake, like that represented on the clay statuette reassembled from the two fragments K 1534 and K 6900 from *Katane*), as well as a Lydian headband. Also, Stieber 2004, pp. 129-135 for luxury accessories.
[24] παρθενία, παρθενία ποῖ με λίποισ΄ὰ<π>οίχηι ; / οὔκετι ἥξω πρὸς σέ, οὔκετι ἥξω (Sapph. 114 V.).

throughout the Greek world and which is regularly used to express the transition to female maturity. They can be thought of as *topoi*.

Flowers play a key role and are at the centre of a number of metaphors relating to the maidens' sexual development[25]. Whether it is a still-closed bud, a blooming flower, a woven garland or a flowery meadow where the maidens pick flowers, the narrative focuses on virginity and its loss through marriage, often told in myth as a divine abduction[26]. Much has been written about the symbolic link between ritual *anthologia* and pre-nuptial rituals, the youthful connotations of the activity of the *anthologein* and the *stephane plokein*, the recurrence in ancient sources of metaphors between the flower and the loss of virginity[27]. Thus, in a fragment of Sappho from a nuptial song (*epithalamus*), the metaphor of a hyacinth crushed by shepherds is a clear allusion to the loss of virginity (οἵαν τὰν ὐάκινθον ἐν ὤρεσι ποίμενες ἄνδρες / πόσσι καταστείβοισι, χάμαι δέ τε πόρφυρον ἄνθος ..., Sapph. fr. 105b V.), while for Archilocus (fr. 196) it is the ἄνθος παρθενήιον that is fallen on the ground.

In Catania, maidens bearing a still-closed bud on their breast prevail (Fig. 6)[28], an element that immediately recalls the link between the statue of Phrasikleia and the epigram inscribed on its base, where there is a clear reference (*antì gamo*) to the age and status of the dead maiden[29]. But the newly blooming flower, as represented by certain iconographic types of statuettes from the Katane context, also refers to the maiden's youth and *charis*, as well as her capacity for seduction[30].

Fig. 6. Detail of a standing female figurine with bud from the votive deposit of piazza San Francesco (CT), inv. n. K 1956 (photo Archive ISPC CNR).

Scenes of *anthologia* are often accompanied by scenes of *karpologia* in Locrina *pinakes*. They are often associated with fruit shaped like apples[31].

The symbolism of the apple also relates to this moment of rapid transition to maturity in female life (Fig. 7). A fragment

[25] On the meaning of flowers in Greek imagery, Kéi 2021.
[26] Bruit-Zaidman 1996, pp. 6-7 (with bibliography).
[27] Representations of scenes of *anthologein*, *karpologein* and *stephane plokein* can be found on Lokrian *pinakes*: Rubinich 2002-2003, pp. 123-225; especially for the iconography, pp. 128-131. Also, Portale 2008, pp. 50-51 (with bibliography).
[28] The bud, with its flame shape and small bulge at the base, is documented both as an attribute of female statuettes and as a clay model. The shape, which is also attested in the Lokrian *pinakes*, has been linked by Meirano to the Rosaceae family (Meirano 2003, pp. 159-160, figs. 12, 15). For Corinth, Merker 2000, pp. 124-125.
[29] For Phrasikleia, Svenbro 1988; but especially, Stieber 2004, pp. 141-178, with bibliography. For a new interpretation (although difficult to share in my opinion) of the statue as a representation of a she-bears associated with the cult of Artemis, and of the flowers and buds on the diadem and the bud held in the left hand, as *crocus sativus* (*krokos*), see Olcese 2021 (with a complete bibliography on the statue). For the inscription: *IG* I^3 1261.
[30] Kéi 2021, pp. 159-193.
[31] For *karpologein* in Locrian *pinakes*, see the bibliographical reference *supra*, note 27.

Fig. 7. Detail of a standing female figurine with apple from the votive deposit of piazza San Francesco (CT), inv. n. K 1939 (photo Archive ISPC CNR).

by Sappho mentions a *glykymalon*, a kind of apple, on a high branch so that the pickers couldn't reach it (οἷον τὸ γλυκύμαλον ἐρεύθεται ἄκρῳ ἐπ' ὔσδῳ, / ἄκρον ἐπ' ἀκροτάτῳ, λελάθοντο δὲ μαλοδρόπηες, / οὐ μὰν ἐκλελάθοντ', ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐδύναντ' ἐπίκεσθαι, Sapph. 105a V.). These verses, thought by some have been referred to a maiden who had never been married, have been read by other scholars as a praise of the bride who preserved her virginity[32]. Apples also resemble the female breast. The apple also has a specific value linked to the marriage: an apple was made for the young bride to eat as soon as she arrived at the groom's house and before going into the bridal chamber[33].

Fig. 8. Standing female figurine with bird from the votive deposit of piazza San Francesco (CT), inv. n. K 435 (photo Archive ISPC CNR).

Less present among the statuettes of maidens is the one with the bird (Fig. 8). Ornithological references are very common in Alcman's poetry, in relation to the voice of the virgins composing the *choros*, a quality useful for the *parthenoi* to participate in collective performances[34]. The bird, however, is an indicator of youthfulness, as shown by the many representations of *parthenoi* holding doves or birds on funerary stelae in Archaic and Classical times[35]. In one fragment, Anacreon describes a woman as a melodious and graceful *chelidòn* (ἡδυμελές χαρίεσσα χελιδοῖ, Anacr. fr. 394a).

It remains to make a few remarks on the most common attribute in the Catania deposit, generally held by young girls in the centre of the chest: the poppy capsule (Fig. 9). I will not dwell on this subject, which I dealt with in more detail at the Lille conference, published in 2015[36]. It is necessary to recall briefly that the capsule in the statuettes belongs to the *papaverum somniferum*, which is a

[32] Griffith 1989; Carson 1990, pp. 135-167, 144.
[33] Oakley – Sinos 1993, pp. 35 (with the reference to the literary sources), 138, note 96 for the symbolism of the apple.
[34] For example: Alcm. *PMGF* 3, 99-101.
[35] Stears 1995, p. 119; Margariti 2017, *passim* and especially pp. VI-XII and note 52. In the non-funerary sculpture, it is worth remembering the Lyon Kore (Acr. 269): Richter 1968, pp. 57-58, figs. 275-281; Karakasi 2003, pp. 126-127, pl. 239.
[36] Pautasso 2015; 2020, p. 239, note 33 for an exhaustive bibliography.

Fig. 9. Detail of a standing female figurine with poppy capsule from the votive deposit of piazza San Francesco (CT), inv. n. K 566 (photo Archive ISPC CNR).

different species from the field poppy. The capsule, already represented from the Bronze Age and known for its therapeutic properties since ancient times, contains alkaloid-based substances that can be used for analgesic purposes or can be lethal, if taken in excessive doses[37]. It is worth noting, however, that there do not seem to be any references in Archaic lyric poetry that associate the capsule with maidens; one has to go back to the classical period, when the *Corpus Hippocraticum* links the use of such substances with the phases of female maturation, during which it is likely that the sedative qualities of the alkaloid substances were exploited for therapeutic purposes[38]. However, nothing precludes a *lectio facilior* linked to the symbolism of fertility – due to the presence of innumerable seeds inside –, or to the symbolism of sleep/death and fertility connected to the concept of rebirth, which is well suited to the transition from one female biotic phase to another.

4. Final Remarks

These brief remarks, limited to a small number of Archaic lyric authors, underline the need to take into account, in addition to sculpture and figured pottery, the immaterial datum provided by literary evidence in an attempt to reconstruct the archaic mentality. It was within this mentality that the figurative terracottas in question were produced and used. What emerges is the need to consider the image as a whole, as a semantic unit, in which body, dress and attribute converge to convey a clear message of identity that was recognizable in the archaic cultural sphere. This also entails reflecting on the terminology to be used in describing these statuettes, which are neither offerers nor dedicators, but simply images of maidens represented in their social and familial status[39]. In collective rituals common in the Archaic period, they displayed themselves as desiderable and chaste, formalising their (probably imminent) transition from *parthenoi* to *nymphai* in front of the deity and the community.

[37] Interestingly, in her paper on Phrasikleia, Olcese pointed out that *crocus sativus* (*krokos*) has the same characteristic as the poppy capsule, suggesting a link with the status of the maiden (*kore*, as quoted in the inscription) in a crucial moment of passage (Olcese 2021, pp. 240-241).
[38] On ancient Greek medicine and its relation to the phases of female life, see Fleming – Hanson 1988; Tognazzi 2008.
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«AND RECEIVED HIM IN HER FRAGRANT BREAST, WITH HER IMMORTAL HANDS...». MOTHERS AND MOTHERHOOD IN THE FIGURINES FROM ANCIENT GELA, SICILY

Marina Albertocchi*

Abstract: The figurine of mother with child, *kourotrophos* or *kourophoros*, has a certain success in Greek coroplathy due to the importance of the subject, hope for the perpetuation of the human lineage. Due to its diffusion, the subject has been extensively analyzed in several contributions, taking into consideration iconographic and symbolic aspects. In this contribution the attention will be focused on Classical figurines from the Demetriac sanctuary of Bitalemi in Gela, depicting a mother with a child held in various ways (on her shoulder, in her arms or at the breast). Their number in the sanctuary - contrary to what is commonly reported in archaeological literature - is limited, especially when compared with the images of donors with piglets and *protomai,* that dominate the coroplastic repertoire of the sanctuary in the same period. We will therefore try to understand the meaning of this subject in the context of the sacred area, in connection with Greek ritual customs regarding motherhood and early childhood.

Keywords: Gela, Bitalemi; *kourophoroi*; *kourotrophoi*; Demeter; Motherhood.

1. The Theme of Motherhood in Sicilian Coroplasty and in the Sanctuary of Bitalemi at Gela

The topic of motherhood and early childhood in Greek world has been the focus of many studies in recent years, especially from an anthropological perspective[1], and that refrain us to resume this important issue. With regards to Sicily, specifically, an historian of religions, Giulia Pedrucci, collected a good documentary base, which includes the clay figurines found in the main centers of the island[2]. In the works of the scholar, the archaeological documentation is also used to review the hypotheses on the particular veneration paid here towards the chthonic deities, in favor of local divinities with an accentuated maternal value[3].

The purpose of our contribution, however, is to focus on the iconographic type depicting a mother with a child and on the significance of the gesture of the offering, regardless of the

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1 Several contributions can be mentioned in this regard, as: Dasen 2004; 2011a; 2011b; 2015b; Hackworth Petersen – Salzman-Mitchell 2012, and previously Hatzisteliou Price 1978.

2 Pedrucci 2013a.

3 Pedrucci 2013a, especially pp. 233-234, 257-259. For the Bitalemi sanctuary, in particular, the scholar recalls the role of an indigenous component, preceding the Greek cult: Pedrucci 2013a, pp. 153, 198-199.

identification with the divinity who receives it. Through the dedication of their "terracotta substitute", in fact, the brides sought divine protection during the delicate phase of pregnancy or in the preliminary ones, or else celebrated the divine intervention following a successful delivery and the full survival of the newborn[4]. The analysis will be conducted starting from a very specific context such as that of the sanctuary of Bitalemi in Gela: the clay offering, like all the rest of the objects chosen and dedicated in a sacred area, must in fact be understood in its specific dedicatory context.

The sacred area located on the sandy hill of Bitalemi, already investigated by P. Orsi and extensively by P. Orlandini in the '60s, is widely known[5] (Fig. 1). The number of finds, the excellent state of preservation especially of the materials from the archaic level of attendance and the particularity of some votive depositions have stimulated the interest of scholars. The discovery of some graffiti from the Classical period that name Demeter and the festival that was celebrated here (the *Thesmophoria*), also led to a sure identification of the cult practiced in the sanctuary, confirmed by the exhaustive study just published.

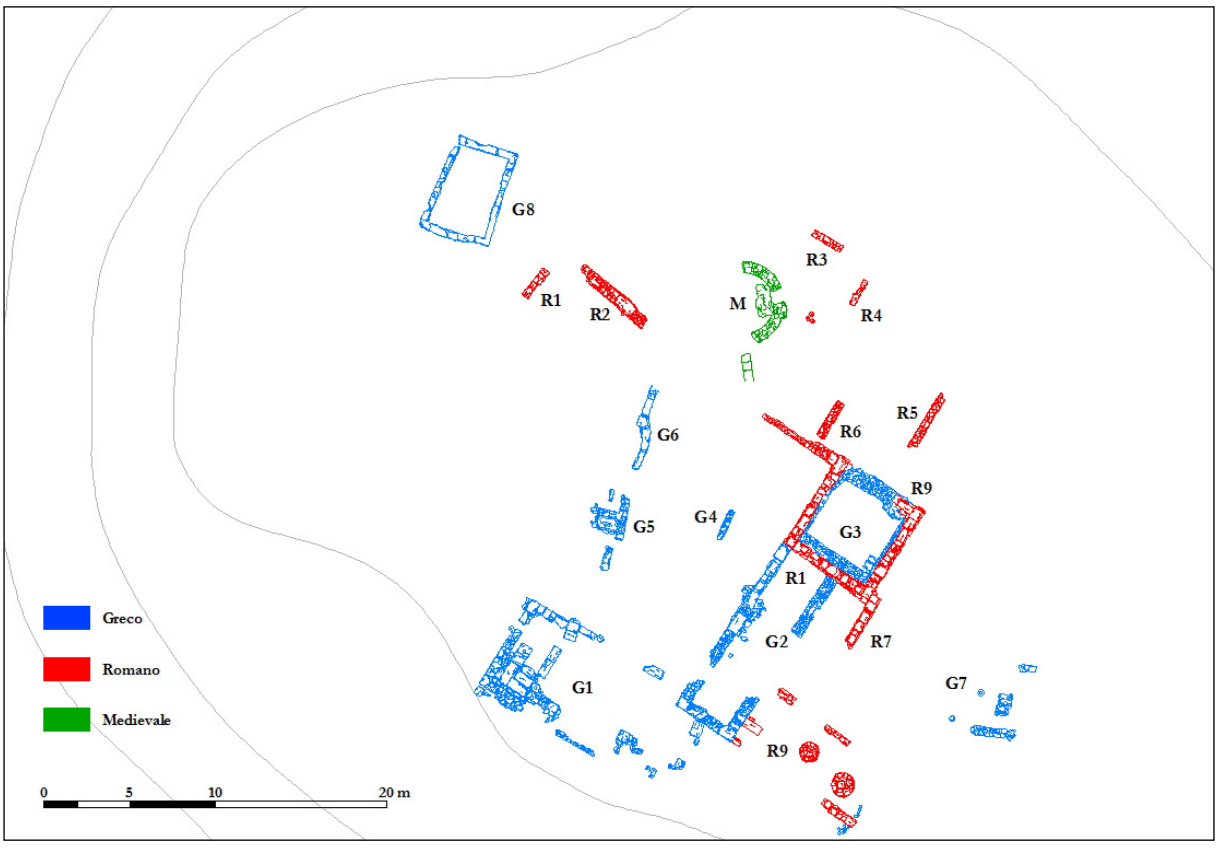

Fig. 1. Overall plan of the buildings brought to light at Bitalemi (after Albertocchi 2022, fig. 3).

[4] For this interpretation of the terracotta figurines see the methodological considerations in Huysecom-Haxhi – Muller 2015, especially p. 434.

[5] For the Archaic phase of attendance of the Bitalemi sanctuary in Gela (Orlandini excavations) see now Albertocchi 2022, with previous bibliography and presentation of the excavation regarding the subsequent phases. For Orsi excavations in 1901: Orsi 1906, coll. 575-730.

The attendance of the sacred area began in the last quarter of the seventh century BCE: the building of modest mud-brick structures (G 6, 8) dates back to this first phase (the so-called stratum 5). Around the middle of the 5th century BCE more significant structures of sandstones blocks, also intended to provide shelter for the worshippers (stratum 4a, buildings G 1-2-3), were erected to replace three older buildings, of which some walls remain (buildings G 4, 5, 7, pertaining to the so-called stratum 4b). After the Carthaginian destruction of 405 BCE the area continued to be occasionally frequented during the 4th-3rd century BCE before being occupied by a farm in the imperial era and subsequently by a small church consecrated to the Virgin of Bethlehem in the Middle Ages.

2. *Kourophoroi* and *Kourotrophoi* Figurines

The figurines of mothers with children found in the excavations of the sanctuary by Orsi and Orlandini are divided into two main groups: those standing, with a child on their shoulder, and those sitting or standing with a child on their lap or at the left side of the body. Within the two groupings, variants are then distinguished.

The most frequently attested group is that of standing female figurines, wearing a pleated chiton, which supports a child seated on their left shoulder: it is made up of 11 specimens, mainly fragmentary[6] (Fig. 2). Recognition of the entire representation is only possible thanks to some of these, which show how the child, whose nudity is defined and who is connoted as a boy, clings to the mother's head with his right hand. Only in a figurine found by Orsi does the child rest his head on that of his mother, as if it were asleep[7] (Fig. 3).

The type of the female figurine with another small figure on the left shoulder is found elsewhere, both in the coroplastic repertoire of Greece in the Classical and early Hellenistic periods, and in other Sicilian contexts, although not very widespread. In the other – occasional – known cases from Sicily, however, the figure is rather

Fig. 2. *Kourophoros* from Bitalemi (after Panvini 1998, p. 178).

[6] Inv. nn. 18233, 19413, 21072, 24366, 24487, 30744, 31333 (Archaeological Museum, Gela), 21415 (Archaeological Museum, Syracuse): Orsi 1906, col. 703, figs. 530, 531. Pedrucci 2013a, pp. 318-319, nn. 32, 35. The scholar doubtfully attributes to the materials brought to light in the sanctuary of Bitalemi also two similar figurines, one preserved in the Regional Archaeological Museum of Palermo (inv. n. 5483), in Winter 1903, pl. 150.1, and one item kept in the British Museum (inv. n. GR 1992.5-16.1), in Burn 2000, fig. 1. Moreover, we couldn't identify the figurine inv. n. 21550 (Archaeological Museum, Gela), mentioned by Pedrucci 2013a, p. 318, n. 31. The inventory number (8739) attributed to the figurine published by Orlandini 1966, p. 20, pl. IX.1, and then Panvini 1998, p. 178 and Pedrucci 2013a, p. 319, n. 34, is probably uncorrect.

[7] Inv. n. 21402 (Archaeological Museum, Syracuse): Orsi 1906, col. 703, fig. 531; Pedrucci 2013a, p. 319, n. 35. An identical position characterizes, however, the figurine kept in the British Museum, for which see the previous note.

Fig. 3. *Kourophoros* from Bitalemi (after Orsi 1906, fig. 531).

Fig. 4. Figurine from Bitalemi inv. n. 21544 (after the archive of Orlandini).

small and does not rest on the mother's head[8]. In specimens from Greece the mother often holds her right arm raised to hold the baby on her shoulder[9]. Instead, in the figurines from Bitalemi the detail of the child's arm that holds the mother is explicitly emphasized together with his nudity; even his size, larger than the other known types, seems to confirm the emphasis on the message to be conveyed, where the kourotrophic/maternal aspect stands out clearly.

Moreover, it should be noted that the type is a local creation, as denounced by the treatment of the dress, identical to that of some figurines of offerers with piglets very common in the Geloan repertoire of the same period[10], as well as that of the mother's hair, loose on the shoulders, and that identifies her as a young woman.

In the sanctuary there is also a fragmentary specimen[11] belonging to a type only known from a female figurine from the necropolis of Sant'Anastasia at Randazzo[12] (Fig. 4). In addition to the importance of the circulation of this iconographic type, which possibly shows a link with the Locrian area[13] (and does not find comparisons between the numerous types of offerers widespread in Gela), it is important to remember that it does not seem to be associated to the *kourotrophoi* terracottas *tout court*, because the female little figurine carried on the shoulder, who is wearing a peplum, is perhaps better interpreted as a divine image carried in procession[14]. Besides, at Akragas are attested more ancient figurines that support the statue of a deity on the right shoulder[15].

8 For example, Pautasso 1996, p. 39, pl. V.47; Pedrucci 2013a, p. 330, n. 69.
9 For example, Winter 1903, pl. 144.4; Vierneisel-Schlörb 1997, pp. 46-47, pl. 27, n. 140.
10 Cfr. in particular the type 11 in Sguaitamatti 1984, pp. 83-86, fig. 25.
11 Inv. n. 21544 (Archaeological Museum, Gela): Pedrucci 2013a, p. 320, n. 37.
12 Magro 2016, pp. 253-254, fig. 15.
13 In this regard we can recall the existence, in the sanctuary of via Don Russotti at Francavilla di Sicilia, of a large fragmentary *kourophoros* that holds a standing child (Adonis?): this peculiar iconography seems to be a variant of the common representation of Eros or of a winged girl supported by a female figure in the Locrian-Medmean repertoire: Spigo 2017, pp. 305-307, figs. 7-9.
14 The female figurine from Randazzo, very close to our specimen, is interpreted by Magro 2016 as a young woman who carries on her shoulder a divine image in procession; moreover, the representation is compared with a peculiar Locrian iconographic type, the so-called type of "simulacro in processione", for which see Barra Bagnasco 1984, p. 47, fig. 13; 2005, pp. 86-88. See also Spigo 2017, pp. 316-317. From the stylistic point of view, a close comparison for Randazzo's figurine consists of a figurine from Tegea kept at the Louvre Museum: Mollard Besques 1963, p. 34, pl. XIII.1. The iconography will have some success in the later Punic repertoire: cfr. Albertocchi 1999.
15 Cfr. van Rooijen 2019, pp. 371-375.

In the second geloan group of figurines we must distinguish between the standing figures who carry the child in their arms, and those seated, who hold it in their lap.

The standing female figures are five, wearing *chiton* and *himation* and holding a child, partially wrapped in a flap of the cloak, on the left side of their body with both arms[16] (Fig. 5). Two identical figurines occur among the materials of the sanctuary of Poggio dell'Aquila near Grammichele[17]. The child is represented with very short hair and looks like a newborn (maybe swaddled?). The iconographic type, also present in the Rhodian repertoire although not common[18], finds some comparisons in Magna Graecia too[19].

Only one figurine, from Orsi excavations, belongs to a different type: the woman wraps a small child in the heavy cloak on the left side of her body[20] (Fig. 6). The type occurs sporadically in the Aegean area, but it seems to achieve some success in the Western-Greek repertoire[21].

Fig. 5. *Kourophoros* from Bitalemi inv. n. 31331 (after Panvini 1998, p. 178).

Among the seated figures, however, three different types are distinguished. The first depicts a female figure seated on a *diphros* with a child in her lap, depicted frontally, holding a small patera or a tambourine in his hand[22] (Fig. 7). Four fragmentary figurines, poorly preserved, belong to this iconographic type. Similar images of seated female figures are frequent in the coroplastic repertoire from Greece[23], and frequently occur in Sicilian contexts for a long period of time. For example, similar more ancient types come from Camarina, Selinus and Monte Bubbonia[24]: here the child holds his right arm raised, but without any attributes. The type continues to be reproduced even in 4th century BCE with figurines where the mother offers her right breast to the child, as shown by a terracotta from Selinus[25]. In the wide range of variants found in Greece, the baby is poorly defined, and generally depicted in

[16] Inv. nn. 21262, 31331, 31332, s.n.i. (Archaeological Museum, Gela), 21432 (Archaeological Museum, Syracuse): Orsi 1906, col. 709, fig. 539; Orlandini 1966, p. 20, pl. IX.1; Pedrucci 2013a, p. 317, nn. 28-30.

[17] Manenti 2012, p. 78, fig. 8; Pedrucci 2013a, p. 322, nn. 44-45. Another figurine belonging to the same type, from Assoro, is published in Winter 1903, pl. 150.3. Cfr. also a similar, later, figurine from Selinus (Triolo Nord sacred area) in Fanara 1986, p. 31, fig. 20 (= Pedrucci 2013a, p. 327, n. 59). Three fragmentary specimens belonging to a close type come from Akragas: De Miro 2000, p. 169, pl. LXXV.466-467, p. 246, pl. LXXV.1481 (= Pedrucci 2013a, p. 309, nn. 4-6).

[18] Cfr. Winter 1903, pl. 145.5 (from Halicarnassus); Higgins 1954, pl. 39, nn. 229, 459.

[19] Cfr., for example, the *kourotrophoi* figurines published in Ammerman 2002, pp. 128-133.

[20] Inv. n. 21431 (Archaeological Museum, Syracuse): Orsi 1906, col. 703, fig. 529; Pedrucci 2013a, p. 316, n. 27. Comparable for the way of wrapping the child with the *himation*, but represented sitting, are two other figurines in Pedrucci 2013a, p. 312, n. 13 (from Megara Hyblaea), p. 316, n. 26 (from Carrubazza sanctuary in Gela).

[21] Winter 1903, pls. 143.3 (from Cyprus), 151 (almost exclusively from Capua).

[22] Inv. nn. 21188, 24488, 26612, 27418 (Archaeological Museum, Gela). Pedrucci 2013a, p. 320, n. 38.

[23] Cfr. Winter 1903, pls. 139-142, where, by contrast, the child is never depicted in a similar frontal position, and in most cases the mother offers him the breast; Higgins 1954, pl. 73, nn. 551-559.

[24] Pautasso 1996, p. 39, pl. V.44 (= Pedrucci 2013a, p. 333, n. 77); Gabrici 1927, col. 273, pl. LIX.8 (= Pedrucci 2013a, p. 326, nn. 55 and possibly 56, Selinus); Pancucci 1976-1977, pp. 473-475, pls. LVI-LVII (Monte Bubbonia).

[25] Fanara 1986, p. 34, fig. 26 (= Pedrucci 2013a, p. 328, n. 61, from Triolo Nord sacred area.

Fig. 6. Kourophoros from Bitalemi (after Orsi 1906, fig. 529).

Fig. 7. *Kourophoros* from Bitalemi inv. n. 24488 (after the archive of Orlandini).

the act of taking his mother's milk. Once again, the Geloan figures belong to a local variant, where the coroplast has added an attribute in the child's hands: the only close comparisons come in fact from a couple of figurines found in the city acropolis[26].

Three seated female figurines, poorly preserved, hold a child depicted in profile, perhaps in the act of taking milk from his mother's breast[27] (Fig. 8). The clothing of the figures, with *chiton* and *himation* that covers the head, belongs to a repertoire of late Archaic tradition. The baby, who appears to be wearing a headdress, was clearly added in a later time, as an attribute for the female type[28].

Lastly, completely different from the other ones and certainly more recent among the dossier of mothers with children from Bitalemi, there is a female figurine seated on a *diphros* holding an infant in her lap, wrapped in swaddling clothes and larger than life size[29] (Fig. 9). The mother wears her hair styled in the *lampadion*-knot, according to a common fashion among Artemis

[26] Panvini – Sole 2005, pp. 158-159, pl. LXXXIII.c (= Pedrucci 2013a, p. 338, n. 93, from the stipe under building 2 on the acropolis); the scholars mention the existence of another specimen belonging to the same type, unpublished, from the excavations on the acropolis. From the same area comes also the similar figurine inv. n. 35973 (Archaeological Museum, Gela), in Pedrucci 2013a, p. 314, n. 20, and likely the figurine inv. n. 8477 (Regional Archaeological Museum, Palermo), in Pedrucci 2013a, p. 315, n. 22.

[27] Inv. nn. 21127, 24656 (Archaeological Museum, Gela), 21400 (Archaeological Museum, Syracuse): Orsi 1906, col. 709, fig. 538; Pedrucci 2013a, p. 321, nn. 40, 41, 89, where is proposed a most recent chronology. Comparable figurines of late 6th century BCE have been found in Selinus (Triolo Nord sacred area): Fanara 1986, p. 33, fig. 25 (= Pedrucci 2013a, p. 328, n. 62); Gabrici 1927, col. 294, pl. LXXV.9 (= Pedrucci 2013a, p. 326, n. 57, from Malophoros sanctuary), and Megara Hyblaea: Pedrucci 2013a, p. 312, n. 15.

[28] None of the different versions of *kourotrophoi* and *kourophoroi* in Winter catalogue can be compared with the Geloan specimens.

[29] Inv. n. 31334 (Archaeological Museum, Gela): Orlandini 1966, p. 20, pl. IX.1; Pedrucci 2013a, p. 320, n. 39.

Fig. 8. *Kourophoros* from Bitalemi (after Orsi 1906, fig. 538).

Fig. 9. *Kourophoros* from Bitalemi inv. n. 31334 (after Orlandini 1966, pl. IX.1).

representations and which characterizes the youth sphere[30]. Again, the attribute of the newborn was added to a seated female type already attested in Gela[31].

3. Dating and Interpretation

From a chronological point of view, it is not easy to distinguish the variants of the iconographic type accurately, especially because of the fragmentary nature of the objects. Even the discovery data does not offer any holds: the figurines were in fact largely recovered during cleaning or in layers remixed by illegal excavations, or isolated, in the 5th century BCE level of attendance of the sanctuary. The only mention in Orlandini excavation journal is the reference to the 3 whole figurines found during the excavation of building G 2 – used throughout the second half of the 5th century BCE – and probably belonging to the nucleus of materials deposited inside it[32] (Fig. 10).

The dating must therefore be entrusted to stylistic criteria, which seem to define a fairly long-time span of diffusion. The sitting type with baby at the breast still belongs to models widespread at the end of the sixth century BCE, with the addition of the child. But the most successful type, representing a standing female figurine with a child on her left shoulder, can easily be compared to

[30] Cfr. Portale 2008, p. 11. About this hairstyle, and its spread in all artistic *media* from the end of the fifth century BCE to characterize young girls and deities, Gkikaki 2011.

[31] Spagnolo 2000, pp. 187-188, pl. LV.7. This type knows no convincing comparisons in the wide catalogue of Winter 1903.

[32] Figurines inv. nn. 31331-31333. Albertocchi 2022, p. 504 (excavation journal of April 6, 1964); for the excavation of the building see Albertocchi 2022, pp. 9-15.

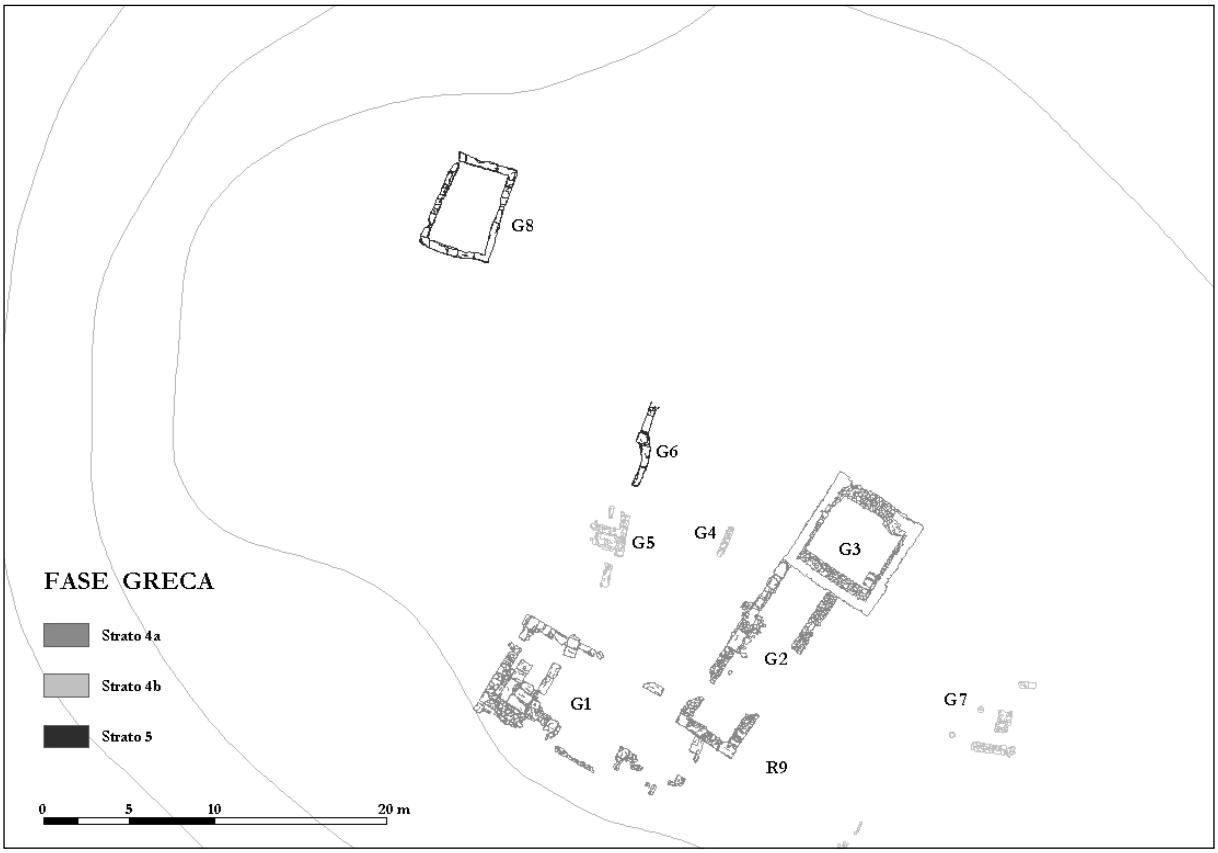

Fig. 10. Plan of the structures of the sanctuary in the Greek period (after Albertocchi 2022, fig. 9).

some offerers with piglet well attested in the Geloan repertoire of Classical period[33], and therefore suggests a more detailed period of diffusion, around the middle of the fifth century BCE[34].

The types representing the seated figurines with a child holding a small patera or a tambourine have been created later: identical specimens from the acropolis have been dated to the end of the 5th century BCE[35].

The five standing figures, with a newborn wrapped in a cloak, have a short hairstyle, quite similar to that of the so-called Baubò found on the acropolis, dated at the end of the century as well[36]. Such hairstyle also constitutes a meaningful element: in vase painting of Classical period, it characterizes slaves, courtesans or elderly women[37]. It is therefore possible that these female figures holding a child are to be interpreted as nurses with a still nursing baby, rather than mothers, which

[33] See *supra*, note 10. The type 11 in Sguaitamatti 1984 has been dated between the second and the third quarter of the 5th century BCE.
[34] Although they are different, even the few other female figurines with a child on their shoulder found in Sicily are dated around the middle of the 5th century BCE: cfr. Pautasso 1996, p. 39, pl. V.47; Orsi – Lanza 1990, p. 30, pl. XII, sep. 618bis.
[35] Panvini – Sole 2005, p. 159.
[36] For this terracotta image see Masseria 2003; Lentini 2005.
[37] Himmelmann 1971, p. 16.

are instead represented in the act of clearly exhibiting an older child, holding him on the left shoulder.

Even the isolated type with a swaddled infant can be dated to the last decade of the fifth century BCE, as indicated by both the hairstyle of the mother and the representation of the newborn in swaddling clothes, however poorly attested in the island, as shown by specimens from Morgantina, Grammichele, Selinus and Lipari[38].

It's so possible to conclude that this iconographic type is quite successful among the terracottas found in Bitalemi only from the Classical period onwards, according to the findings of other contexts of discovery. Indeed, the image of a female figure holding a child occasionally occurs in the coroplastic repertoire of the Archaic period, and only one of the earlier terracottas found in the sanctuary portrays a female figure with a baby[39].

From a typological point of view, it is interesting to underline how all the types we have distinguished, and which testify to a certain variety in the figurative repertoire, find very few comparisons outside of Gela. In fact, these are mostly locally made variations of the theme, inspired by models widespread in other areas of the Sicilian and Greek world.

In this regard, it is not farfetched to wonder whether the different ways of holding and representing the child do not have a precise semantic value, that is to say alluding to the desire to depict different age groups, underlined by the attention to details such as position, clothing, hairstyle, sex and in some cases the presence of an attribute. If the swaddled child held by the seated figurines is certainly a newborn, and only slightly older must be the child held tight to the chest and protected by the cloak (maybe also swaddled), the broader number of representations concerns a child sitting on the shoulder, that appears as a boy of 2/3 years[40]. The child nestled in the lap playing with the patera or the tambourine can be included in the same age group too. Similarly, it should be noted that, even in the different variants, the child is always hold on the left shoulder: it is possible that this position reflects a ritual habit, connected to the proximity of the heart, but it can be simply referred to the need of leaving the right arm free[41].

After all, it is well known that in the Greek world, isolated clay representations, more than other visual supports, adopt a communicative system strongly based on the symbolic sphere, where the elements that make up the image must be carefully evaluated to understand the message they wanted to convey. The reworking of iconographic types already known with the addition or

[38] Bell 1981, p. 208, pl. 112.697 (Morgantina); the scholar recalls two comparisons from the Biscari Museum in Catane and from Grammichele. For Selinus see Fanara 1986, p. 27, fig. 83; for Lipari see Sardella – Vanaria 2000, pp. 122-124, pls. XXVIII-XXX.127, XXXII.9.

[39] Albertocchi 2022, p. 344.

[40] There is indeed a clear difference between the age group of the child: if the first 40 days of life are the most critical, because of the high mortality, the early childhood stage (and with it the greatest danger of life) is considered exceeded around 3 years. In Athens this phase is sanctioned by the celebration of the *Anthesteria* which establish, especially for male children, the admission into the civic community: cfr. Dasen 2011a, p. 312. On the proud display of children on their mothers' shoulder see also Castiglione in this volume.

[41] In favour of a functional interpretation is the habit of keeping children on the left side of the body even today: see in this regard mothers with children sitting on their left shoulder who go to the chapel of the Virgin, at the foot of the hill of Bitalemi, photographed by Orlandini in the sixties: Orlandini 1966, pl. IX.2; 2008, p. 174, fig. 70.

replacement of a significant element, such as the presence of the child itself, is therefore a clue not only to the desire of the workshops to vary the repertoire in economy, but also to the request of the client who wanted to highlight a very specific aspect, connected to the vow expressed[42].

In term of context, as already mentioned, only three of the figurines mentioned can be traced back to the discovery area, without however the possibility of referring them to a specific deposit.

The data are often lacking also for the other figurines from Sicilian contexts that we used for comparison: most of them in fact belong to museum collections. For those found during regular excavations, their origin is mostly to be referred to sacred areas, where they were collected in dumps, but in often unreliable contexts (as in the case of Poggio dell'Aquila near Grammichele or the "stipe" under building 2 in Gela). The identification of the divinity worshipped in these areas must be prudently limited to the hypothesis of a female deity that presides over the rituals of passage, and that can acquire chthonian nuances[43]. Only in the case of the sanctuary Triolo Nord in Selinus the presence of a graffito led to the hypothesis that Hera was the recipient of the cult[44]; it should be remembered, however, that the *kourophoroi* figurines coming from this sanctuary were recovered from the earlier level of attendance and reconsecrated in the following Punic phase, perhaps as a guarantee of the sacredness of the area itself[45].

Finally, an extremely small number of specimens comes from funerary contexts (Camarina and Monte Bubbonia), in accordance with the more general limited occurrence of terracottas in burials compared to sacred areas, at least until Hellenistic times.

4. Final Remarks

Despite the fact that the materials from other rich insular sacred contexts are largely known only from preliminary publications, the number of specimens from the Bitalemi sanctuary, consisting of about thirty fragmentary figurines, still appears higher than that of the isolated finds from these areas.

The fact is not surprising, as the theme of fertility is traditionally subject to the protection of Demeter *Thesmophoros*[46]; however, it has been used to connect the theme of motherhood in an exclusive way to the Demetriac cult certainly practiced in the sanctuary, applying the same interpretation to the other discovery contexts[47]. For some scholars, moreover, the image of the

[42] On the role played by customer requests in the development of new iconographic types or variants see the considerations in Albertocchi – Parisi 2019, pp. 494-496.

[43] Significant, in this regard, is the oscillation between the identification with Demeter or Athena for the worship in the sacred area of Carrubazza in Gela: cfr. Parisi 2017, pp. 90-92. See also *infra*.

[44] Parisi Presicce 1986, pp. 52-53.

[45] Chiarenza 2007.

[46] On this subject, its implications and interpretations cfr. Chlup 2007.

[47] For the contexts of discovery, see *supra*. For other reading keys for these representations, too often referred uniquely to the Demetriac cult, see Portale 2008, p. 21, where is overshadowed the possibility that they could allude to some *kourotrophoi* nymphs or even different deities, such as Athena or Artemis, to which it is not unusual to dedicate figurines of mothers as a thanksgiving for a successful delivery. About the kourotrophic value of Athena and Artemis see Pedrucci 2013b, pp. 108-118.

mother with child could be identified with Demeter carrying her daughter Kore on her shoulder[48]. In this regard, it is necessary to bear in mind that the traditional identification of most of figurative terracottas with images of deities is now outdated, and in most cases they should be better understood as conventional representations of mortals: in the same sense we interpret our figurines, placed in the sanctuary in order to obtain the divine protection, replacing the dedicator in a perpetual presence near the god[49].

The archaeological cult studies of recent years, however, have finally allowed to diversify the almost exclusive attribution of Sicilian sacred areas to the Demetriac cult. Moreover, it has been underlined that the protection of the *kourotrophic,* maternal sphere characterizes various female deities of the Greek pantheon such as Hera and Artemis, as well as Demeter, in addition to those belonging to the non-Greek *substratum,* like Pedrucci thinks[50]. The presence of this representation, therefore, alluding to the request for divine protection during delivery and in the early childhood of the newborn, is certainly appropriate in different cultural contexts, even if referable to tangent spheres of influence.

Coming back to Bitalemi, it should however be emphasized that the iconographic type of the mother with child is definitely marginal within the repertoire of 5th century terracottas dedicated in the sanctuary, despite the wide chronological span of diffusion. This observation is particularly evident in relation to the numbers of donors with piglets and *protomai*, which represent almost all the bulk of the late Archaic and classical terracotta types here attested[51]. The theme, moreover, obtains limited success even among the figurine types known from Greece in the same period.

It is therefore possible to conclude that the *kourotrophia* motif was not a favorite subject in the figurative repertoire of Greek terracottas before the Hellenistic era. It was most easily represented in an allusive way, through the apotropaic images of pot-bellied demons or animals such as monkeys carrying a baby on their shoulder[52].

Besides, it has been widely noted that the act of breastfeeding a newborn is sparsely represented in the Greek artistic *media* up to the Hellenistic age, according to a widespread tendency to avoid making explicit references to a domestic and private sphere, and usually reserved for nurses[53]. The topic, moreover, has been deeply explored by Pedrucci and this exempts us from going back. Similarly, we have suggested elsewhere that a sort of iconographic taboo that originates

[48] For example, Mollard Besques 1954, pl. 72.C 98; Zuntz 1971, pp. 96, 177.
[49] Recently, for a synthesis on the issue, see Muller 2022, with previous bibliography.
[50] See note 3. The few figurines belonging to this iconographic type found in funerary contexts above mentioned are interpreted here with a divine protective function against the deceased: see Pancucci 1976-1977, pp. 474-475, pl. LVI.2-4 (Monte Bubbonia); Orsi – Lanza 1990, pp. 26, 30, pls. IX, XII (Camarina).
[51] The majority of protome types has been published by Uhlenbrock 1988: the total number of unpublished fragments, however, exceeds 300 specimens. Few examples come from the Archaic level: cfr. Albertocchi 2022, pp. 334-335. The female offerers with piglet have been published by Sguaitamatti 1984, which includes in its catalogue about a hundred specimens brought to light in the excavations of the sanctuary.
[52] See the examples mentioned by Dasen 2015a, pp. 43, 47, figs. 5, 14. For a little monkey *kourophoros* from Akragas see De Miro 2000, p. 133, pl. LXXV.58 (= Pedrucci 2013a, p. 337, n. 88).
[53] Pedrucci 2013b, especially pp. 220-223; 2018. On the subject, especially in comparison with the different situation provided by the Italic framework, see previously Bonfante 1997.

in sacred laws could explain the limited number of clay representations relating to the delicate moment of pregnancy[54]. Women in this state, vulnerable and contaminated, were in fact banned from community festive celebrations, and ritual actions had to be mainly conducted within the household[55]. We can attribute the same interpretation to the rarity of representations of swaddled infants, a practice limited to the first 40-60 days of life according to the few literary testimonies (although there's no full agreement between the scholars)[56]. It was far preferable to portray the child at a later stage of his development, when it could have greater chances of survival.

In conclusion, the brief review conducted on the figurines depicting images of mothers with children from Bitalemi offers further confirmation of a trend already highlighted: Greek ritual customs define a sort of buffer zone around a phase as important as that of pregnancy, delivery and survival of the newborn. Thus, they constitute a precious lens for observing the wishes of the sanctuary visitors for a childbirth, and the thanksgivings addressed to Demeter *post partum*, when danger and pollution associated with pregnancy and delivery were over.

[54] Albertocchi 2018, pp. 65-66. For a different point of view on this phenomenon see Ducaté Paarmann 2005.
[55] About this situation see in particular Parker 1983, pp. 48-73; Guettel Cole 2004, pp. 106-108; Dasen 2011b, p. 5; Avramidou 2015.
[56] On the need for swaddling the body of the newborn see Dasen 2011a, p. 302; see also Beaumont 2012, pp. 50-52.

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MADE IN CLAY: PHOENICIAN AND PUNIC FEMALE IMAGERY FROM SARDINIA

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Abstract: This paper provides an overview of Sardinian anthropomorphic figurines dating from the 7th to 5th century BCE. It examines the development over time of trends and artistic styles in relation to the representation of feminine figures. It also explores the connections between the Sardinian figurines and Eastern models during the earliest phases of their creation. The study aims to rekindle interest in these ancient artefacts and their significance for the Phoenician and Punic societies of Sardinia.

Keywords: Terracotta; Plaque Figurines; Female Iconography; Phoenician and Punic Art.

The use of terracotta for figurines was widespread throughout the Phoenician and Punic worlds. The reason for this is the versatility of the raw material and its ease of processing. This essay will examine the gynomorphic plaque figurines discovered in Sardinia, dating from the 7th to the 5th century BCE. During this period, some 'Oriental' iconographic types, as well as Greek-influenced images depicting votaries, musicians, or potential representations of deities, were found primarily in funerary and cultic contexts. Despite their prevalence, Phoenician and early Punic[1] figurines discovered in Sardinia have not yet been systematically studied and a comprehensive review of coroplastic productions is currently lacking[2].

The scarcity of contextual and chronological information poses a significant challenge in studying and interpreting these figurines. The history and methods of excavations in the main

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[1] In this work, traditional chronologies used in studies by Italian scholars on Phoenician and Punic Sardinia are followed: Early Phoenician (8th-mid. 7th cent. BCE); Phoenician (second half 7th-mid. 6th cent BCE); Early Punic (late 6th-mid. 5th cent. BCE), Punic (second half 5th-mid. 4th cent. BCE); Late Punic or Punic-Hellenistic period (second half 4th-second half 3rd cent. BCE).

[2] Researchers have presented some studies that provide a synthesis of Sardinian terracottas in: Moscati 1986, pp. 129-138; 1988c, pp. 675-686; 2005, pp. 187-201; Pesce 2000, pp. 231-264; Bartoloni 2009, pp. 242-251; Pompianu 2017; Fariselli 2019. Many papers have been devoted to individual specimens or single classes: Picard 1967, pp. 31-34; Cecchini 1974; Chiera 1980; Moscati 1980; 1981; Manfredi 1988; 1989; Bisi 1990, pp. 39-60; Ciasca 1991, pp. 33-51; Poma 2017, *passim*; Ibba 2018. For an overview of votive terracotta figures from the Punic-Hellenistic period, see: Garbati 2008.

Phoenician and Punic settlements, which began in the late the 19th century, have resulted in the loss of important stratigraphic and chronological data. Another issue is the scarcity of figurines that can be found in literature: some of them are barely mentioned in excavation reports, while many others are yet to be published. A small number of terracotta figures are housed in various museums and private collections and have been featured in exhibition catalogues or in monographs and reference works published since the 1970s by Sabatino Moscati and his pupils[3]. However, there have been some recent and innovative studies that have focused on the Sardinian so-called grinning masks or on the bottle-shaped suffering devotees[4].

In brief, this paper aims to provide a general overview of the current state of knowledge on Sardinian anthropomorphic figurines, pending further research[5]. We will highlight how the trends and styles used in representing human figures evolved over time between the 7th and the 6th century BCE. The available documentation suggests that the variety of imagery is somewhat restricted, both in terms of numerosity and types. Notably, certain highly distinctive types are absent, such as enthroned or standing pregnant women[6] or daily-life scenes that have been documented in places such as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Carthage[7].

The production and style of figurative terracotta was strongly influenced by Eastern models during the early phases (7th-6th centuries BCE). This is evidenced by the presence of various types of artefacts, such as male bearded heads[8], masks, and *protomai*, which can be traced back to Cyprus or the Levantine coast but have had a much wider distribution in the Western regions. Local workshops and artisans in Sardinia further developed this Eastern-inspired figurative repertoire, incorporating unique characteristics that reflect, in some specific cases, the persistence of the area's artistic, social, and cultural traditions, such as the ones in Bitia or Neapolis[9]. This reinterpretation of traditional Eastern models, as seen in other art forms such as ceramics and sculpture, is a clear indication of the artistic experimentation that was taking place at the time.

Beginning in the 5th century BCE and especially between the 4th and the 3rd centuries BCE, there was an exceptional increase in the number of these artefacts. Furthermore, the repertoire was enriched by a wide variety of Greek and Hellenistic-inspired models, resulting in the creation of types such as seated goddesses, temple-boys, cruciform figures[10], and the well-known incense

[3] Uberti 1971; 1973; 1975; 1977; Moscati 1987a, pp. 83-102; 1988a; 1988b, pp. 89-111; Bartoloni 1989, pp. 169-178.
[4] Garbati 2004; 2016; Fariselli 2011; Del Vais – Fariselli 2012; López-Bertran 2016; Orsingher 2018; 2020.
[5] In what follows, this contribution aims to be as comprehensive as possible, however, it acknowledges that it cannot fully mitigate the current lack of a comprehensive overview of Sardinian figurines.
[6] In Sardinia, figurines of pregnant women have been found, which cannot be linked to the known Eastern models of *dea Tyria gravida*. These have been discovered in advanced chronologies, dating from the 3rd century BCE to the 1st century BCE, as seen in an example found in Bitia (Bassoli – Chergia 2016, p. 335, fig. 7) or in the cruciform figurines of the sanctuary of Strumpu Bagoi, Narcao (Zara 2018, p. 302).
[7] See, among others: Culican 1969; Chérif 1997, pp. 31, 92, pls. I.1, I.3, XXXVII.314; Fontane – Le Meaux 2007, pp. 188, 352-353, nn. 200-210, the provenance of n. 209 is incorrectly indicated as "Tharros (Sardaigne)"; Maillard 2021; Montanari 2021.
[8] Moscati 1996, pp. 43-45.
[9] Pesce 1965; Uberti 1973; Moscati 1989.
[10] Some examples in: Pla Orquín 2017, fig. 416; Pompianu 2017, pp. 399-400, 408-409, nn. 179-181, 215-218; Zara 2018. As recently highlighted by G. Garbati, from the second half of the 6th and the 5th century BCE, an adherence

burners[11]. This phenomenon is consistent with what is observed in the majority of Phoenician and Punic centres throughout the Mediterranean[12]. The increase in production and the incorporation of diverse Hellenistic inspirations reflects the cultural and commercial exchange that was taking place during this period. In Sardinia, distinctive terracotta that blend Eastern and Greek traditions into original forms were produced.

1. Standing Naked Woman

Focusing on the topic of female figurative terracotta representations, this article begins with an examination of plaques depicting frontal standing women, both dressed and undressed, that were created by using univalve moulds[13].

The first type found is that of standing, naked females touching their breasts, with slightly pronounced bellies. These figurines, which are often referred to as "Astarte plaques" or "Breast Astarte"[14] in scholarly literature, are well-known in the Levantine coast and have been dated to the period between the 9th and the 7th centuries BCE, and in some cases even further back to the Bronze Age[15].

In Sardinia, only two specimens of this type have been discovered to date[16]. The first one, from the necropolis of Nora (hypogeum n. 28)[17], with partially missing legs[18], stands out from a background[19] and measures 20 cm in height. This specimen has been dated to the 7th century BCE[20] (Fig. 1.a). The chronology of this artefact is suggested by the similarities in facial features and

to the new Hellenic stimuli that had already emerged in the years around 550 can be observed in Sardinian terracotta figures. According to this author (Garbati 2021, p. 347), these Hellenistic models come mainly «dall'area greco-orientale e da quella siceliota, grazie alla diffusione di matrici o prodotti finiti».

[11] These iconographies were widely documented across the island: Moscati 1988a, pp. 19-21, nn. 28-39; 1996, pp. 59-60; Basoli 1990; Manca di Mores 1990; Regoli 1991; Campanella – Garbati 2007; Garbati 2008; Ibba 2022.

[12] Bisi 1990; Bolognani 2022.

[13] Plaque figurines made by one mould were the dominant type of anthropomorphic clay figurines in Sardinia, particularly during the Phoenician and early Punic phases. However, starting from the 5th century BCE, a growing number of terracotta figurines made using a double mould technique begin to appear.

[14] Albright 1939.

[15] Pritchard 1943, pp. 40-97; Winter 1983, pp. 103-110, with bibliography; Nunn 2000, pp. 36-37; Ulbrich 2010, pp. 175-177; Weissbein *et al.* 2016, pp. 41-46.

[16] A hand-made and round terracotta preserved in the Castagnino collection was sometimes associated with this type. However, as previously noted by S.M. Cecchini (1974), there are significant differences in the manufacturing techniques and stylistic features that separates the two types of figurines.

[17] Patroni 1904, coll. 191, 224, pl. XVIII.1.

[18] Chiera 1978, pp. 64-65, pl. II.1; Moscati 1986, p. 131, fig. 57.

[19] Some descriptions of this specimen mention the presence of a diadem or a head covering and a veil that hangs down the back of the figure (Lilliu 1949, coll. 388; Chiera 1978, p. 64; Bisi 1990, p. 44; Pesce 2000, p. 232). These two elements, interpreted as having a Hellenistic style, have led to a proposal of a later dating, between the 5th and 4th century BCE, for the terracotta. However, as already pointed out by S.M. Cecchini (1974, note 12), «il velo (…) può verosimilmente intendersi in modo più semplice come il fondo della placchetta su cui si intagliano i contorni della figura».

[20] For an in-depth examination of the introduction of the motif of the woman pressing her breasts in Sardinia, see: Cecchini 1974.

hairstyle, as well as the overall appearance of the naked body of clay figurines from Tell Kazel[21] and of some bronzes from Phoenicia[22].

A second example (Fig. 1.b) was discovered in Tharros and dates back to the 6th century BCE. Currently, it is on display in the British Museum in London[23]. The facial features are well-defined, and the ears are prominent, with traces of black colouration still visible on the Egyptian-style wig[24]. These traces of paint are evidence of an ancient colouring, which was likely a common feature also among Sardinian examples. Similar representations of women holding their breasts can also be found in Cyprus and other Levantine sites, often decorated with elaborate jewellery such as intricate necklaces and armlets[25].

Fig. 1. Plaque figurines of naked females holding their breasts from: a. Nora (photo by P. Bartoloni) and b. Tharros (after Thomas 2004, fig. 115).

Upon further examination of Sardinian documentation, several images that represent a woman holding her breast can be seen, both on ivory amulets and gold pendants from Tharros[26], and carved in stone, such as the stelae from the Tophet sanctuary of *Sulky*, dating back to the second

[21] Capet – Gubel 2000, p. 447, fig. 22.
[22] Fontan – Le Meaux 2007, p. 344, n. 134.
[23] Barnett – Mendleson 1987, pp. 71, 179, pl. 31.11/9.
[24] The proportions of the face, the shape of the eyes and mouth, as well as the Egyptian hairstyle, are very similar to those on a contemporary *protome* from the same site of Tharros, belonging to the Gouin collection (Taramelli 1914, fig. 16), which in turn is identical to two examples from Carthage, one of which is richly decorated with colorful pigments, dated by C. Picard to the 5th century BCE (Picard 1967, pp. 25-26, figs. 31-32).
[25] See for example: Ulbrich 2010, fig. 9.3; 2016, fig. 2.a.
[26] Taramelli 1914, p. 265, fig. 23; Cecchini 1974, pp. 196-197; Fariselli 2022a.

half of the 7th century and the early 6th century BCE[27]. The nudity, gestures, and specific attributes such as Egyptian crowns found in these statuettes, jewels, and stelae are often seen by researchers as divine in nature. In fact, these depictions are commonly identified as possible representations of the goddess Astarte[28].

Moreover, other scholars have explored the potential connection between this iconography and female spaces or rituals associated with women's strength[29], particularly in relation to life events such as childbirth and breastfeeding. It is possible that this gynomorphic representation, with the significant gesture of holding the breasts depicted accurately, could be interpreted as a static symbol of more complex worship practices and rites that encompass not only the female world but also the life cycle of all community members[30]. Breast compression is a way of gently squeezing the breast to put pressure on the milk glands causing them to release milk. This semantic allusion to maternal milk is surely related to the centrality of this female liquid in sacred and funerary rituals. As proposed by M. López-Bertran and M. Ferrer, maternal milk could be interpreted as a protector and regenerator element and also a marker of life transitions in Phoenician and Punic communities[31].

2. Standing Dressed Woman

The second type of plaque, known in literature as mummiform figures, dates to the 7th century BCE and shows a strong Egyptian influence. Two examples have been found in Tharros: a complete plaque measuring 25 cm in height, depicting a frontal standing young woman with a hairstyle reminiscent of an Egyptian wig, dressed in a decorated long garment with a belt, and bare feet (Fig. 2.a)[32]; the other, fragmentary specimen, was discovered during surveys at the Capo San Marco area, and only the feet and base remain (Fig. 2.b)[33].

Another specimen from the Gouin Collection[34], with a missing head, is less intricate; it is very likely that details of the garment, represented by a *Wheset* breastplate and a long robe with a

[27] Lilliu 1949, coll. 381-387; Bartoloni 1986, pp. 58-59, pls. XXXIV-XXXV, nn. 203-206, 208. In particular, the specimen n. 205 is noteworthy for its volumetric and naturalistic representation of the human figure. The nude iconographic subject on these stelae does not appear to be documented after the 6th century BCE. For new insights about the chronological framework: Pla Orquín 2020.

[28] The Nora's one was interpreted by G. Pesce as the image of «Tanit nuda che si preme i seni» (Pesce 2000, pp. 232, 244). The meaning and interpretation of the female nude figurines holding their breast in the ancient Near East have been widely discussed: Winter 1983, pp. 169-374; Lipiński 1986, pp. 89-90; Bonnet – Pirenne-Delforges 2004; Cornelius 2014, pp. 98-100; Oggiano 2020; Tassignon 2020, pp. 319-328.

[29] Oggiano 2012, p. 233.

[30] On the active role of figurines, corporality and gestures in Punic rituals see: López-Bertran 2010; Garcia-Ventura – López-Bertran 2013.

[31] Ferrer – López-Bertran 2017-2019; 2020.

[32] Moscati 1986, p. 131, fig. 58.

[33] Fariselli *et al.* 1999, pp. 110-111, fig. 11.b.

[34] Taramelli 1914, pp. 263-264, fig. 8, This specimen, like most of the artifacts preserved in the Gouin Collection, is believed to originate from Tharros with a high degree of certainty.

fringed belt tied at the waist and falling down in front of the legs (Fig. 2.c), were painted, as can be seen in some contemporary cases found in the Carthaginian necropolis of Douïmès[35].

In a chronologically datable phase in the 5th century BCE, as attested by a specific example from Sant'Antioco (Fig. 2.d), the iconography undergoes significant transformations: the physical features and hairstyle, reminiscent of the Egyptian long wig, assume new forms influenced by local/Western taste[36], features that were once defined as "Greco-Phoenician" or "Greco-punic" style[37]. We point out the details of the dress and of the fringed belt rendered in relief. The presence of two holes corresponding to the hands, suggest that the woman may have originally held or worn objects or *insignia* made of perishable materials.

It is a matter of controversy to determine whether the image depicts a deity or a mortal young woman, especially considering the lack of contextual and comparative information regarding the iconographic model outside of small terracotta statuettes. One possible indication that the figure may be a divine representation, rather than a human, is the presence of a pedestal. Additionally, it is worth noting that similar male figures, portrayed as beardless young men wearing an Egyptian-style kilt known as a *shendyt*, with their arms also stretched along their body, have been found both in Carthage and Sardinia (Fig. 2.e-f)[38]. Referring to some large limestone statues found in Phoenician Levant and Cyprus, I. Oggiano suggests that the presence of the *shendyt* may be understood as a general characteristic of a "dimension" that could be associated with cult or social prestige. However, due to the absence of archaeological context, it is challenging to interpret the figure of a man dressed in a *shendyt* as a god, genius, worshipper, or priest[39]. This observation would also hypothetically apply to the male terracotta figurines dressed in *shendyt*.

As for the standing dressed women, we can point out how the publication of the funerary context in which the afore mentioned figurine from Sant'Antioco was discovered (Fig. 2.d) will be essential in order to better understand the meaning of these images. The specimen comes from Tomb 12 PGM of the necropolis of "Is Pirixeddus," which was excavated by P. Bernardini a few years ago[40]. The comprehensive study of the tomb, as well the detailed analysis of the funerary

[35] Four terracotta figures from the same tomb featured exposed red paint skin parts (face, arms, and feet), while the details of the clothing, such as the breastplates and fringed belts, were painted in black: Delattre 1896; 1897, pp. 123-125, fig. 82; Moscati 1972, p. 35.

[36] There is evidence of the same iconographic composition, featuring local variations and a recurring motif of the belt, in examples from both Ibiza and Carthaginian contexts (Almagro Gorbea 1980, Tipo 2 "sarcofoides", pp. 82-83, lám. XXIII.1-4; Poma 2017, pp. 190-194, 355-356, pl. XLI.1-9). Particularly, those from the necropolis of Byrsa (Moscati 1972, p. 46; Chérif 1997, p. 110, pl. XLVI, nn. 397-398), as well as the painted examples previously mentioned and coming from Douïmes, have been proposed to be dated to the 7th-6th century BCE (M.L. Uberti in Chérif 1997, pp. 171, 207-208).

[37] Picard 1967, p. 22; Bisi 1973; 1974; 1978.

[38] Two examples can be cited from the Tophet sanctuary of Nora (Patroni 1904, fig. 24) and from the Punic necropolis of Tuvixeddu (Salvi 2020, pp. 261-262, fig. 1.4, tomb 343). In the first case, the head is missing and only the lines outlining the short skirt can be inferred. It is worth noting that this figure is sometimes listed among female representations (Chiera 1978, p. 65), as G. Patroni described it as such: «una statuetta acefala (…) rappresentante anch'essa la dea nuda, ma con le braccia abbassate lungo la persona e modellata molto superficialmente, o forse cavata senza cura da una forma in cattivo stato» (Patroni 1904, coll. 191).

[39] Oggiano 2013, pp. 351-353.

[40] Bernardini 2021; S. Lancia (2021, p. 254) refers to this terracotta as a "protome" among the funerary assemblage of

Fig. 2. Plaque figurines of standing dressed women and men: a. Tharros (after Pompianu 2017, p. 398); b. Tharros – Capo San Marco (after Fariselli *et al.* 1999, fig. 11.b); c. Collezione Gouin (after Taramelli 1914, fig. 8); d. *Sulky* (after Bernardini 2021, fig. 4.a); e. Nora (after Patroni 1904, fig. 24); f. Cagliari – Tuvixeddu (after Salvi 2020, fig. 1.4). Plaque figurines of women holding a bird from: g. Tharros (after Perrot – Chipiez 1885, fig. 323) and h. *Sulky* (photo by S. Muscuso).

assemblage of burial n. 4 and of the anthropological remains could provide data on gender and age of the deceased. This information would be useful for contextualizing and interpreting the presence of these specific iconographies in funerary contexts.

3. Woman with a Bird

Particular attention should be given to the figurines depicting a woman cradling a bird to her breast, an iconography that is rarely documented in Sardinia and is generally believed to date back

burial n. 4, which also included an umbilicated dish, a bell, a razor, and a mirror.

to the late 6th century BCE and the early 5th century BCE. Inspired by archaic Greek models[41], these figurines have only been seen from two terracotta plaques found in the necropolises of Tharros (Fig. 2.g)[42] and *Sulky* (Tomb 3A) (Fig. 2.h) [43].

Both specimens can be classified within the Punic production group GC A I_{SP} established by L. Poma[44]. They were made using a single mould, have a curved back, and feature a suspension hole above the head, characteristics that are common among most archaic figurines from Sardinia. The figures are depicted in a stiff, frontal pose, with well-defined facial features, including large eyes and full, slightly smiling lips. They have wavy hair that falls over their shoulders. The right arms are bent, with hands near breasts holding a bird, while their left arms are held at their sides, with the open palm pressed against their thigh, possibly holding the robes. They are dressed in a plain, long robe (*chiton*) with minimal detailing likely due to the worn state of the mould used in their production. In the *Sulky* specimen, the drapery of the *himation* is barely visible, and only tiny traces of red and black paint remain. The bird has been interpreted as an attribute of a goddess, a votive offering, or a sacrifice[45].

4. Drum Players

Starting from the 6th century BCE, Sardinia witnessed the emergence of new types of plaques featuring oriental subjects, yet stylistically inspired by the Greek production of the Eastern Mediterranean. These plaques depict images of women holding a round object in front of their body, identified as a hand-drum or *tympanum*. All these figurines are depicted in a frontal pose and are between 16 to 30 cm in height. The tambourine player is one of the most significant iconographies of Western Phoenician coroplastic traditions. It has been attested in North Africa, Sicily, and Ibiza[46]. The background of these figurines can be traced back to the Orient, where examples have been documented in Southern Phoenicia and Palestine from the 2nd and 1st millennia BCE[47].

The *corpus* of Sardinian tambourine player figurines consists of more than 30 examples. The largest number of finds, approximately 20 of them, have been recovered from the necropolis and the Tophet sanctuary of Tharros. In this site, a great diversity of types was documented. Some women, stand on a pedestal with bare feet, wearing a long, plain, girdled robe and headdress, and

[41] See Poma 2013.
[42] Barnett – Mendleson 1987, pp. 71, 179, pl. XXXI.14/11; Poma 2013, p. 123.
[43] Muscuso 2017, p. 334, fig. 5.
[44] Poma 2013, p. 120, pls. XII.3-6 (from Carthage), XIII.1 (from Ibiza).
[45] Bird sacrifice remains have been widely documented in Phoenician and Punic necropolises and sanctuaries; birds are named along with other animals such as adult cattle, calves, and goats in the sacrifice rates (D'Andrea 2017; 2020; Pla Orquín 2021, p. 405); as noted by B. D'Andrea (2020, p. 153) some «tipologie sacrificali, ŠṢP e ḤZT, riguardano soltanto gli uccelli (nominati anche in relazione al ŠLM KLL); sulla base soprattutto di argomentazioni di natura etimologica, questi sacrifici sono stati collegati a pratiche divinatorie».
[46] Ferron 1969.
[47] For a detailed analysis of the iconography of plaques and figurines of women holding a hand-drum from southern Phoenicia, Palestine, and Transjordan, as well as a reflection on the use and meaning of these figurines, see Paz 2007.

their hair is worn over their shoulders in three long curls on either side (Fig. 3.a-e, g). Others have a simpler dress and do not have a pedestal (Fig. 3.f). In all cases, the emphasis placed by the artisans on the movement of the hands is very striking: the left hand supports the tambourine from below, while the right hand strikes it.

In one case (Fig. 3.h), the characteristics of the clay used and the stylistic similarities with contemporary Carthaginian terracotta suggest that this specimen may have been imported from abroad, possibly from Carthage. However, in many other cases, the presence of multiple specimens with the same dimensions and formal characteristics suggests local production[48].

Among the series of terracotta belonging to the oldest group, of which there are 5 examples (Fig. 3.a-e) and various other fragments, one is currently preserved in the museum of Cagliari. This specimen still retains the original decoration on the dress, featuring bands and small alternating red and black lines on the cloak (Fig. 3.e)[49].

Drum players are also documented in the sanctuary of Strumpu Bagoi[50] and in the Punic necropolises of Tuvixeddu[51], San Sperate[52] and Nora[53] which still show the autonomy and variety of the types produced in Sardinian workshops[54].

Recently, a fragment of a tambourine player (Fig. 3.i) was uncovered during excavations in the inhabited area of *Sulky*, now known as Sant'Antioco. The fragment was unfortunately found in the layers used to prepare the pavement for a Roman road. The area is believed to have been a sanctuary dedicated to the *rbt Elat* during the Roman Republican era (end of 2nd-1st century BCE). It is likely that there was also a small sanctuary or domestic shrine in the area during the Phoenician and Punic period, as indicated by the presence of materials such as razors, betyls, and a bronze "Cypriot" stand[55]. The surface is heavily worn but still preserves traces of the whitewash glaze that covered it; both the figure and the clay used are very similar to the imported specimen previously discussed that was found in Tharros (Fig. 3.h).

Also, from Sant'Antioco, two unusual and previously unpublished miniature tambourine players[56] are presented. They do not measure more than 6 cm in height and are believed to have originated maybe from the Tophet. Despite their small size, the attention to detail and craftsmanship in these miniatures is striking. Based on the shape of the tunic, featuring a central vertical fold[57],

[48] In addition to the large number of terracotta figurines and the numerous molds found in Tharros (Fariselli 2022b, p. 217, note 13, with references), none of which currently depict tambourine players. Recently kilns were unearthed at Sa Codriola that were primarily used for ceramic production, but also, as hypothesized, for the production of terracotta figurines: Fariselli 2022b, p. 209.
[49] Bartoloni 1989, fig. 24.
[50] Zara 2018, pl. I.7.
[51] Salvi 1998, p. 11; 2000, p. 61.
[52] Ugas 1993, pp. 58-60, pl. XXXIV.
[53] Patroni 1905, col. 191-192, pl. XVIII.1-2; Chiera 1978, p. 65, pl. II.2-3.
[54] For completeness, we mention a plaque preserved at the Civico Museo Archeologico di Milano (inv. A 0.9.9) that is said to be from Sardinia.
[55] Pompianu 2018.
[56] Cod. catalogo nazionale: 2000083116 (https://www.catalogo.beniculturali.it/detail/ArchaeologicalProperty/2000083116); 2000085035 (https://www.catalogo.beniculturali.it/detail/ArchaeologicalProperty/2000085035).
[57] At the international conference "Storie di terracotta: What can terracottas tell us. Coroplastic Polysemy in the Ancient

Fig. 3. Tambourine players from: a-h. Tharros (a. after Fontan – Le Meaux 2007, p. 213; b. after Uberti 1975, pl. I.A 2; c. after Barnett – Mendleson 1987, pl. 110.19/12; d. photo by P. Bartoloni; e. after Bartoloni 1989, fig. 24; f-h. after Pompianu 2017, p. 399); i. *Sulky* (photo by R. Pla Orquín); j. unknown provenance (after Pesce 2000, fig. 101); k. Fragmentary mould from Cagliari (after Chessa 1992, pl. LX).

which shows close similarities to some depictions on stelae from the same Tophet sanctuary[58], these miniature tambourine players may be dated to the 5th-4th century BCE. The image of the female tambourine player must have held a significant and meaningful significance for the ancient inhabitants of *Sulky*. This is evident from the over three hundred votive stelae depicting this image[59]. The large number of female musicians' images suggests that music and songs played a crucial role in Punic rituals and specifically highlights the role of women in the performance of funerary and Tophet ceremonial activities[60].

Mediterranean", held on November 10-12, 2022 at the University of Cagliari, Dr. G. Manca di Mores presented an unpublished terracotta from the temple of Antas (Fluminimaggiore), which reproduces the same garment and attitude as these miniature terracottas but on a larger scale.

[58] Bartoloni 1986, nn. 284, 288, 290, 295.

[59] Bartoloni 1986; Moscati 1986; Pla Orquín 2018, pp. 94-97.

[60] López-Bertran – Garcia Ventura 2008.

The female figures depicted on the stelae, with a chronology between the 6th and 4th/3rd centuries, allow for a study of the evolution of the iconography over time. By the second half of the 4th century, the frontal attitude is lost and the garments become softer and more draped, reflecting a shift towards Hellenistic forms. This stylistic transformation is also evident in clay figurines, as seen in two terracotta figures from Strumpu Bagoi[61] and of unknown provenance (Fig. 3.j)[62], as well as in a fragmentary mould found in a sector of the Punic settlement of *Karaly*, located on the shores of the Santa Gilla's Lagoon (Fig. 3.k)[63].

5. *Protomai*

To conclude our overview, it is worth mentioning the numerous Sardinian *protomai*, which are bodiless depictions of the face, hair, and part of the bust of women. These figures are often interpreted as portraits of a deity, despite the absence of distinctive elements or gestures. They have been discovered at various Phoenician and Punic sites in the western Mediterranean, such as Ibiza[64], Mozia[65] and Carthage[66], as well as in the eastern Mediterranean[67]. In Sardinia, the largest group of *protomai* comes from Tharros, where a range of stylistic changes can be observed over time, from Egyptianizing to what has been described in literature as "Greco-Phoenician" and later Hellenistic[68] (Fig. 4.a-e). Despite these changes, the original significance of the *protomai* appears to remain unchanged and continues to be utilized in the same contexts to communicate specific ideologies and cultural values[69]. However, the true meaning and purpose of these faces remains uncertain. They were primarily found in necropolises such as *Sulky* (Fig. 4.f-g)[70], and Tuvixeddu, as well as in sanctuaries such as the Eshmun temple of Nora[71], and the acropolis of Pani Loriga, which has recently been interpreted as a sacred area[72].

The earliest known model, which appears in the central Mediterranean around the end of the 7th century BCE and is predominantly documented in the early decades of the following century,

[61] Zara 2018, p. 300, pl. I, n. 13.
[62] Pesce 2000, p. 250, fig. 101.
[63] Chessa 1992, pp. 121-123, pl. LX.
[64] Almagro Gorbea 1980, pp. 184-197.
[65] Ciasca – Toti 1994, pp. 9-12; Mammina – Toti 2011, pp. 34-35.
[66] Picard 1967, pp. 20-28.
[67] For example, one specimen dated to the end 9th-7th centuries BCE, was found in Achziv: Mazar 2004, p. 79, figs. 18, 97.
[68] Ciasca 1991, pp. 33-38; Pompianu 2017, p. 403.
[69] It is common to observe the introduction of Greek forms gradually replacing "oriental" iconography in various aspects of Phoenician art, particularly in the Tophet sanctuaries. The stelae from Sant'Antioco, for instance, starting from the end of 5th century BCE, display draped female figures with Greek hairstyles. These changes certainly do not alter the meaning of the votive offering but express the prevailing new artistic tastes in the Mediterranean sphere. For the stelae see Bartoloni 1986.
[70] Ciasca 1991, pp. 41-43; Tronchetti 2002, p. 145, pl. VIII.
[71] Bonetto – Marinello 2018, p. 129, fig. 8.
[72] Pietra *et al.* 2021.

Fig. 4. *Protomai* from: a-e. Tharros (a, c, e. after Pompianu 2017, p. 403; b. after Fontan – Le Meaux 2007, p. 362; d. after Uberti 1975, pl. V.A 30); f-g. *Sulky* (f. after Moscati 2005, fig. 86; Pesce 2000, fig. 103; g. after Tronchetti 2002, pl. 8).

portrays a face framed by long hair resembling an Egyptianizing wig, pulled behind the ears and hanging along the shoulders. This model is commonly referred to as an Astarte-type *protomai*[73].

In 2021, an additional fragmentary example was discovered at Pani Loriga (Fig. 5.d)[74], supplementing the two previously known examples from Tharros[75] (Fig. 5.a-b) and the one from the necropolis of *Sulky* (Fig. 5.c) [76]. At present, is unclear whether they were imported from Mozia or Carthage or produced locally. Further archaeometric analysis of the clays may provide additional insights.

This image has been widely attested throughout the Mediterranean and has been found in a variety of forms, such as gold pendants from Tharros and small stone heads from Cagliari, which were recovered from the Predio Ibba necropolis and are no taller than 13 cm (Fig. 5.e-g). As reported by M.L. Uberti[77], these lithic heads have a quadrangular hole in the base, which was likely used for mounting them onto a wooden support, completing the figure. An exceptional example made entirely of wood, which still retains much of its original colour, was discovered in the Punic

[73] Orsingher 2021.
[74] Pietra *et al.* 2021, p. 142.
[75] Ciasca 1991, p. 36.
[76] Moscati 1980, pp. 375-377; 1988b, pp. 97-100.
[77] Uberti 1996, p. 1030.

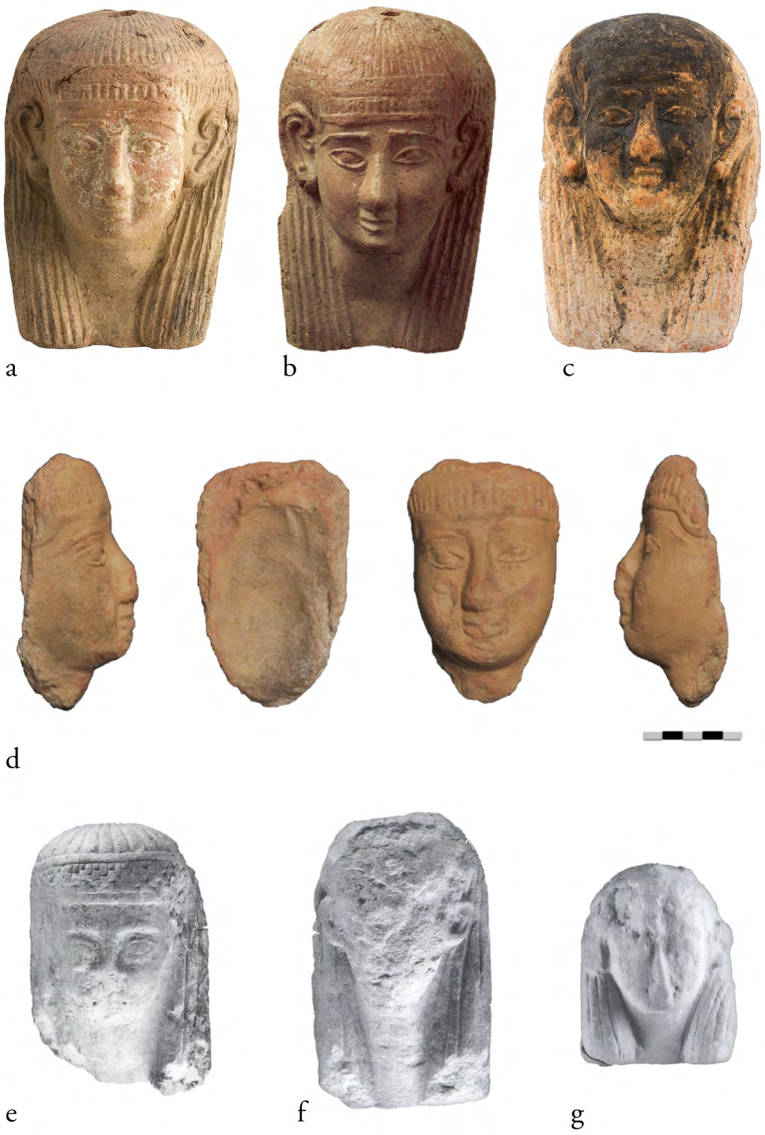

Fig. 5. Egyptianizing *protomai* from: a-b. Tharros (after Pompianu 2017, p. 402; Bartoloni 1989, fig. 22); c. *Sulky* (after Pompianu 2017, p. 402); d. Pani Loriga (after Pietra *et al.* 2021, fig. 50); e-g. Cagliari (after Moscati 1990, pls. XX.3, XXI.2-3).

necropolis of Sant'Antioco. Inside tomb 11, dated to the 5th century BCE, an unusual sarcophagus was found. The lid featured a life-size human figure in relief, depicting a standing woman dressed in ceremonial clothing, likely representing the divine image of the deceased. Unfortunately, the facial features of the figure are not well-preserved, but details of the hair clearly show the same Egyptianizing style as the *protomai* previously discussed[78].

[78] Pla Orquín 2021, pp. 410-411, fig. 8.

5. Concluding Remarks

In this brief overview, we have presented a collection of terracotta figures depicting female forms that began to appear in Sardinia from the 7th century BCE to the 5th century BCE. However, due to the constraints of this study and the need for further research, certain specific issues, like the introduction of certain models and the local reworking of these, including iconographies, such as the representation of suffering devotees and enthroned women found in some Sardinian necropolises, have not been fully explored.

The female figurative plaques and *protomai* from Sardinian mirror patterns were documented in central Mediterranean settlements, such as Mozia and Carthage, and the Balearic Islands. The meanings of these images are highly polysemic, and evolved over time, from the moment of their creation to their final use or deposition in necropolises or sanctuaries. These meanings can be both generic and specific, making it difficult to fully understand them without context.

Future research is needed to arrive at more in-depth conclusions, by considering not only the contemporary representations of men and infants etc. but also by analysing the archaeological context in which these objects were found. Additionally, it will be important to examine how these female representations were used to communicate specific ideologies and cultural values within Phoenician and Punic societies in Sardinia.

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IBERIAN COROPLASTIC ARTWORKS (3RD-2ND CENTURIES BCE): TYPES AND CORPOREALITIES

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Abstract: This paper explores the anthropomorphic clay figurines of eastern Iberia, crafted between the 3rd and the 2nd centuries BCE. In the first two sections, it offers a comprehensive approach to the Iberian society and its imagery. After that, it focuses on the coroplastic production by describing the types according to their mode of production. In the final sections of the contribution, the attention is centered on three specific types: the cult heads, the schematic figurines, and the wheel made. They are examined under the lenses of the so-called body worlds and the emphasis in certain parts of the body. Finally, the paper aims to explore which moments of the women and children lifecycle are highlighted: women seeking to become pregnant and nursing babies.

Keywords: Iberian; Coroplastic Production; Terracotta Figurines; Female; Children.

1. Introduction

Iberian coroplastic artworks are arousing growing interest among researchers who study manufacturing techniques and their social significance for Iberian societies[1]. This paper explores figurines from eastern Iberia. After a brief description of Iberian society, I will examine the emergence of clay figurines in relation to other monumental sculptures. After that, I will present a typological analysis of the figurines, focusing on three types of terracotta, schematic, wheel-made, and cult heads. After this overview, I will explore the construction and understanding of local body worlds and the possible influences and connections with other Mediterranean cultures, especially Punic. Finally, I will try to assess the significance of the abundance of imagery of women and children.

The Iron Age in the western Mediterranean is characterized by a diversity of social organizational systems marked by inequality and hierarchy. Iberia is no exception to this trend. During this period of time, the peninsula was partially inhabited by the "Iberians", a term that refers to the inhabitants of a wide area between the south of France and the Upper Guadalquivir valley whose identification is

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[1] Horn 2011; Grau Mira – Amorós López – López-Bertran 2017; López-Bertran – Vives-Ferrándiz 2018.

based on Hellenistic and Roman textual evidence. This population underwent a series of cultural and social changes around the 6th century BCE that clearly differentiated them from previous societies[2].

These changes were brought about by the actions of both the local inhabitants and other peoples of Mediterranean origin such as Phoenicians, Punics[3], Greeks, and Romans with whom they came into contact. This area was home to a diverse range of social organizations that had little in common with each other in economic or political terms; Iberian political entities varied from one place to another in terms of size, settlement hierarchy, rural strategies, and land occupation. Elites had rich burials in sites with monumental architecture and sculpture, structured the organization of production, and controlled long-distance exchanges. This political arrangement lasted well into the 2nd century BCE, when the Roman occupation of the peninsula brought the existence of these indigenous polities to an end. Some settlements were violently destroyed, while others continued to be occupied although under new forms of political and economic organization[4].

These interactions have been widely studied from different perspectives: architecture[5], the funerary and religious realms[6], through commercial exchanges and political alliances[7] and focusing on economic themes[8]. However, these interactions have not been considered in depth in the study of coroplastic objects, except for *thymiateria*[9]. In the following sections, I will focus on Iberian clay figurines.

2. Scaling Down the Iberian Imagery

During the end of the 6th century, and throughout the 5th and the 4th centuries BCE, life-sized human and animal representations were seen all over Iberian landscapes. Statues and sculptures made in stone gave material visibility to elites; these creations used local symbols and reflected attitudes that were shared over a large area of southeast Iberia, yet they differed notably from those found in other western Mediterranean contexts. They often represented naturalistic and imaginary animals and humans, alone or in groups, depicting narrative scenes of warriors and horsemen fighting other Iberians or individuals facing ferocious animals. The human figures included high-ranking male adults, warriors, horsemen, young women and high-status adult women known as *Damas* ("ladies") such as the well-known Lady of Elx and Lady of Baza, which are busts or seated women featuring a hollow receptacle for the ashes of the deceased[10].

[2] For a general overview of these groups see Ruiz – Molinos 1998; Aranegui 2012.
[3] For the debate about the definition of the Phoenician/Punic people see Sader 2019; López-Ruiz 2021 with previous references.
[4] Arasa 2003.
[5] Prados 2007.
[6] García Cardiel 2014; Tortosa 2006.
[7] Grau Mira 2006; Sala Sellés 2010; Prados 2020-2021.
[8] Iborra Eres – Pérez Jordá 2013.
[9] Marín Ceballos – Horn 2007; Marín Ceballos – Jiménez Flores 2014; García Cardiel 2015.
[10] Zofío – Chapa 2005; Aranegui 2008; 2015; 2018.

These sculptures belonged to a variety of social contexts. Some were displayed in heroic sanctuaries and are thought to represent idealized individuals or groups, figures from mythology, or perhaps divinities; others were displayed in necropolises, signaling the tombs of high-status individuals; and still others were erected to mark territorial boundaries. All these representations were intended to claim rights to the landscape, to gain and legitimize power through the control of land, memories, and ancestors in an area convulsed by violence and by the competition between small polities. Not surprisingly, these sites were located in conspicuous places, on crossroads and by main roads. Although variations occur from one region to another and over time, these ritual places were crucial, together with the settlements, for the construction and maintenance of elite identities up to the 4th century BCE[11].

In the 3rd century BCE, however, there was a significant change. Life-sized animal and human representations were no longer erected; some of them were even violently destroyed, while others were neglected and left to decay[12]. Almost simultaneously, new human representations were scaled down and miniaturized. Although small-scale human figurines had existed well before the 3rd century, they were very limited in number and were displayed selectively in the domestic environment[13].

As part of these changes, representations of humans in miniature suddenly increased in number and were found in altogether different contexts, deposited in territorial sanctuaries, shrines, and houses. This change has been interpreted as an ideological strategy of elites in a new patron–client relationship, in which more people were now granted the right to possess representational imagery than in previous centuries[14]. Given the similarity of decorations and clothing, the figurines represented the same social groups, elites, identified in the sculptures, but they differed in that they were scaled down and deposited in a different social context. The heroic sanctuaries and necropolises of an earlier fell into oblivion, while territorial sanctuaries, visited by people from different settlements, emerged as the new sites for constructing identity under the power of the city's elites. Examples are the sanctuaries of La Serreta, and Tossal de Sant Miquel, to mention two of the best-known sites where clay figurines have been found[15].

3. The Figurines of the Eastern Coast of Iberia: An Overview

The corpus of the clay figurines is varied and disperse; some are numerous, well-documented and well-known, while others are scattered, fragmented or few in number. All of them have been recovered from excavations, from surveys, or from chance finds. In this paper, I will concentrate on

[11] López-Bertran – Vives-Ferrándiz 2018, p. 148.
[12] Chapa 1993.
[13] López-Bertran – Vives-Ferrándiz 2018, p. 149.
[14] Rueda 2011.
[15] Bonet – Grau – Vives-Ferrándiz 2015, p. 267.

six sites in three areas that present a homogenous tradition of the creation and use of clay figurines: La Serreta in the territory of the Contestani, Tossal de Sant Miquel, Puntal dels Llops, Castellet de Bernabé, and la Seña, in the land of the Edetani, and Los Villares- Kelin (Fig. 1). This selection is based on two criteria: first, these six sites present anthropomorphic imagery and especially female figurines, and second, all of them present certain similarities in terms of manufacturing techniques and body decoration. The description begins with the pieces from La Serreta because they are the most numerous. In this paper, the classification of these figurines has been used to create the framework of reference for the other case-studies presented. With the exception of the realistic faces of La Serreta, all the specimens were found in the Edetan and Kelin territories.

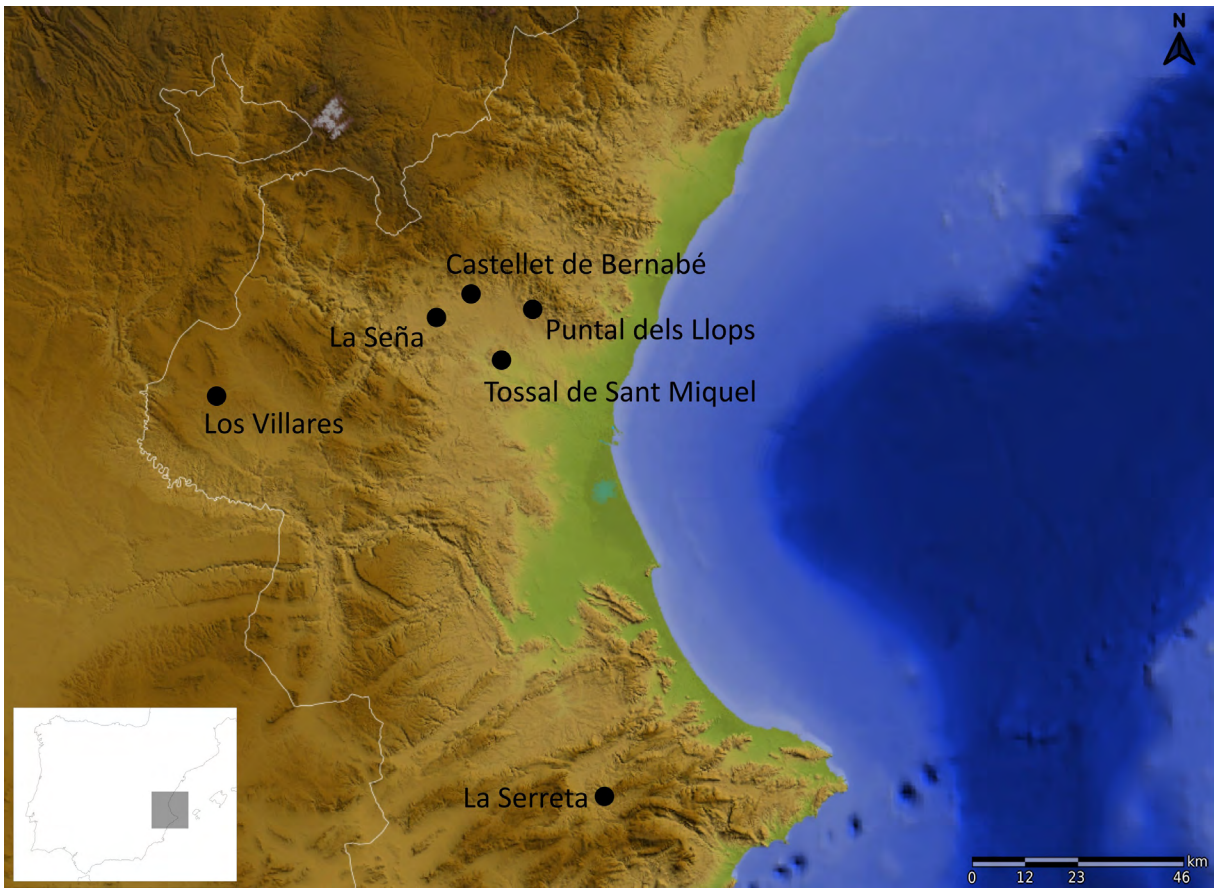

Fig. 1. Map of the sites mentioned at the text.

3.1. *La Serreta Clay Figurines*

The ancient city of La Serreta was founded around the 4th century BCE. The evidence provided by regional surveys, spatial analysis and intra-site explorations indicate that it was the centre of a vast political territory during the 3rd century BCE. It was abandoned following a violent episode in the early 2nd century BCE, although some time after the abandonment it was partially reoccupied. The

settlement spreads over 4 ha and several blocks of constructions have been excavated there since the early 20th century. Spatial analysis has demonstrated that La Serreta acted both as an *oppidum*, a walled settlement that ruled over other settlements, and as a hill sanctuary: in the highest part, remains of hundreds of terracotta figurines, representing mostly human bodies, heads and other parts of the anatomy have been recovered, although no reliable contextual information is available. No traces of buildings have been clearly identified to date, so it is likely that the figures were deposited as votive offerings in an open-air shrine[16].

The collection of terracottas, which is the largest found in Iron Age eastern Iberia, comprises nearly 1500 fragments and 434 identified pieces, most of them representing devotees attending an open-air sanctuary. Scholars such as Juan i Moltó[17] and Horn[18] have stressed the Mediterranean connections of these artefacts and have provided details on their production. However, in this paper, I follow the lines set out in the most recent study by Grau Mira, Amorós López and López-Bertran which provides fresh data and a comprehensive classification[19]. Those authors identified five iconographic types based on the codes of representation of the bodies and also defined subtypes based on gender identification and manufacture techniques. Finally, features for each type and subtype have been defined in terms of body decoration, such as hairstyle, jewellery or veils.

The most abundant type is composed by the "figurines with realistic faces". The mode of production is quite complex, since it involves three stages each one applying a different method. First, a cylindrical torso, made from a piece of rolled clay or a bell-shaped wheel-made torso, was modelled. Then, the face and head were mould-made and applied to the body. Finally, the figurine would be elaborated further through other basic techniques such as pressing certain parts into shape and adding more pieces of clay such as mould-made or hand-made veils, jewellery, or arms. This is a standardized technique that creates a certain degree of homogeneity in the size of these pieces, which are between 15 and 16 cm long. Most of these figurines present female attributes like skirts, veils or earrings (Fig. 2.a).

The second most populous group are the cult heads (Fig. 2.e). They consist of a combination of hand modelling for necks and ornamentation and a mould-made face, using a single mould. The faces present fine features with large almond-shaped eyes and prominent noses retouched by hand; they also bear ears. A large number of these specimens are female, to judge from the body decoration[20]. I will come back to this type later.

The third group are female head-shaped incense burners, again only identified in the form of small fragments. Though we do not intend to study them in depth here, two main groups have been identified: Greek and Greek-like head-shaped incense burners, and then the "Guardamar" type[21],

[16] Grau Mira – Amorós López – Segura Martí 2017.
[17] Juan i Moltó 1987-1988.
[18] Horn 2011.
[19] Grau Mira – Amorós López – López-Bertran 2017, pp. 61-118, chart 1.
[20] Grau Mira – Amorós López – López-Bertran 2017, pp. 64-70.
[21] Abad 1992.

a local adaption of these Greek-inspired specimens. Unfortunately, the fragments of these types are so tiny that they are very difficult to classify[22].

The fourth group comprises schematic and wheel made figurines. In general, they present schematic faces in which the eyes are the most notable feature, represented either by perforations or clay buttons (Fig. 2.b-d).

Finally, the last group comprises sets of figurines. One of the groups identified is based on the "Mother Goddess", a kourotrophic plaque which was found in the settlement, possibly in a cultic room and not in the shrine (Fig. 3.a)[23].

Fig. 2. Figurines from La Serreta. Museu Arqueològic Municipal d'Alcoi Camilo Visedo Moltó, Alcoi (photographs and drawing by Ignacio Grau Mira and Iván Amorós López).

Fig. 3. a. Plaque terracotta of La Serreta (18,2 cm wide x 16,7 cm, high); b-c. figurines from La Serreta. Museu Arqueològic Municipal d'Alcoi Camilo Visedo Moltó, Alcoi (photographs by Ignacio Grau Mira and Iván Amorós López).

[22] Horn 2011.
[23] Grau – Olmos – Perea 2008.

It is a hand-made plaque that depicts diverse figurines that range notably in terms of their size and the activities they are performing. In a central position is an enthroned figure, whose head has not been preserved, holding two babies who are suckling. On both sides of this figure are two other pairs of statuettes of different sizes: the ones on the right are playing a double pipe while one of the pair on the left, which is the larger of the two, rests her arm on the shoulder of the smaller one, probably representing a maternal relationship. Finally, there were two doves between the couples and the central figure, but only one of them has been preserved. Because some schematic figurines from the shrine present the same features as the plaque, it has been argued that they may have been made in the same workshop and represent humans of different ages. Indeed, some schematic terracottas of the shrine appear with their arms raised, as if touching another figurine (Fig. 3.b). I will come back to this plaque later to discuss issues of mothering and childcare. Another group is formed by two or more figurines of the realistic face type. Although the heads are less preserved, the cylindrical lower part of the bodies representing pleated skirts suggests this type[24].

3.2. *The Figurines from the Territory of the Edetani*

In an alluvial plain about 20 km from the coast, the ancient city of Edeta – known today as Tossal de Sant Miquel – ruled over a territory of some about 900 sq km. The settlement, covering around 10 hectares and inhabited from the 5th to the 2nd centuries BCE, stood out as the central place of a territory in which smaller settlements dotted the landscape[25]. Villages and farms were smaller walled settlements located on low hills or on plains, covering no more than two hectares, such as Castellet de Bernabé (Llíria), a fortified farmstead of about 1000 sq m. The site was organized around a street with constructions on either side comprising areas of production and the residences of an elite[26]. There were even smaller hamlets, devoted to a diverse range of productive activities[27]. A number of hillforts on the mountain ranges surrounding the area were intended to mark the boundaries and to ensure defense – they all feature prominent towers and were visually connected. The best-known example is El Puntal dels Llops (Olocau), a small site of some 1000 sq m, delimited by a double walled enclosure, a ditch, and a tower[28]. All these settlements were abandoned following violent episodes around the beginning of the 2nd century BCE, when the Roman occupation of the area brought about a reorganization of the settlement pattern.

As regards the clay figurines, the most numerous samples come from the city of Edeta (Llíria) (Fig. 4.1), more specifically from space 12, identified as a votive deposit of an urban sanctuary. Unfortunately, the figurines were burned and fragmented and are poorly preserved, making their identification quite difficult. However, among the 276 fragments, several human-like figurines have

[24] Grau Mira – Amorós López – López-Bertran 2017, pp. 95-97.
[25] Bonet 1995.
[26] Guérin 2003.
[27] Bonet – Mata – Moreno 2008.
[28] Bonet – Mata 2002.

been identified, some of them defined as cult heads[29]. Other clay statuettes were also recovered from other spaces such as room 49, with a figurine decorated with a headdress (Fig. 5.1) or the specimen recovered from room 114 (Fig. 5.3)[30], both resembling the schematic figurines of La Serreta. Another notable find is the black-African (Fig. 5.2) head without a clear context of provenance[31], but its presence seems to indicate a relation with the Mediterranean, in particular with Punic settlements.

As just mentioned, Puntal dels Llops (Olocau) is an Iberian hillfort that was part of a series of watchtowers located in the reliefs surrounding the territory of the Edetani. This is a fully excavated site of some 1000 sq m delimited by a double walled enclosure, a ditch, and a tower. It was organized around a street with 17 rooms on either side with diverse and complementary functions, ranging from production (milling, weaving, and metallurgy) to storage and cooking (Fig. 4.2)[32]. This site is home to a set of the best-preserved figurines of the area, known as the Edetan cult heads. Room number 1, defined as a domestic chapel, contained 14 fragments of figurines forming part of heads like noses or ears, among which two fragmented but well-preserved heads stand out – one male, the other female. There are also 59 unidentified fragments. From room 3 a well-preserved head defined as female has been identified, whereas in room 4, fragments of heads (a fragmented face, one nose and two ears) have been recovered. The best-preserved specimens come from room 14, with a set of 5 figurines, two identified as female and 3 as male[33]. In addition, two female head-shaped incense burners have been recorded[34] (Fig. 6).

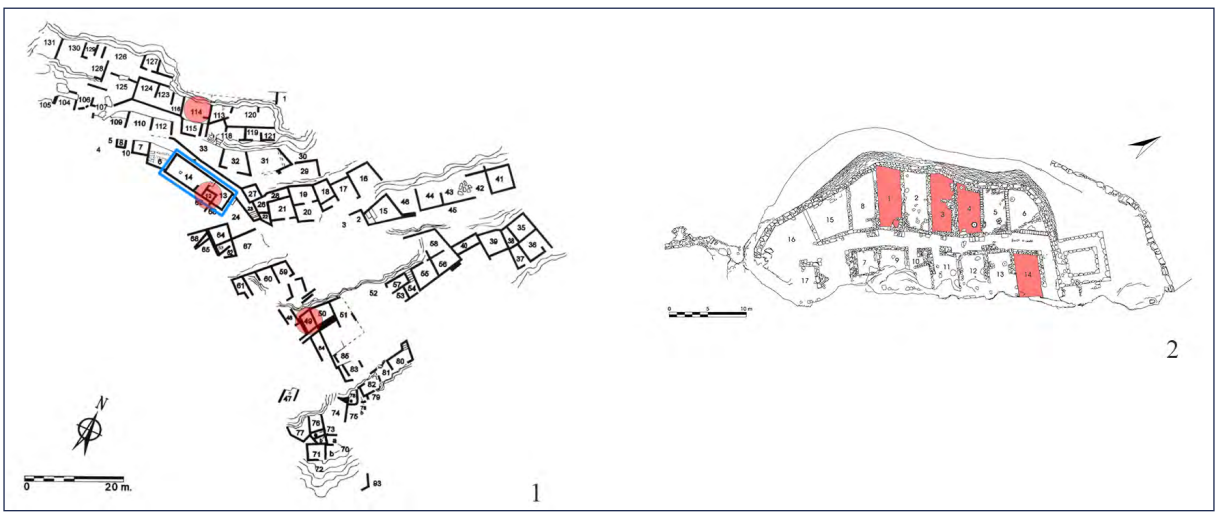

Fig. 4. 1. Layout of Tossal de Sant Miquel. Red dots mark areas with terracotta figurines; 2. Layout of Puntal dels Llops. Rooms with terracotta figurines are shaded in red (after Bonet 1995; Bonet – Mata 2002).

[29] Bonet 1995, p. 484; Aranegui 1997a.
[30] Bonet 1995, figs. 97, 127.
[31] Bonet 1995, fig. 145.
[32] Bonet – Mata 2002.
[33] Bonet – Mata – Guérin 1990.
[34] Bonet – Mata 1981, p. 140, fig. 48, pls. XVIII-XIX.

Fig. 5. Terracottas from Tossal de Sant Miquel de Llíria. Museu de Prehistòria de València (photographs by Jaime Vives-Ferrándiz). Measures: 2,72 cm wide x 8,24 cm high (5.1); 4,50 cm wide x 4,80 cm high (5.2); 4,14 cm wide x 5,87 cm high (5.3).

Fig. 6. Clay figurines from El Puntal dels Llops (Olocau). Museu de Prehistòria de València (photograph by Jaime Vives-Ferrándiz Sánchez). Measures of the best-preserved specimen: 9 cm wide x 18 cm high.

Another settlement in the area of the Edetani, a fortified farmstead named Castellet de Bernabé, presents 3 figurines: the face and the *kalatahos* of a female head-shaped incense burner, a Greek or Punic import[35], an imitation of a female head-shaped incense burner but in this case without perforations in the upper part[36]; and a fragmented face with a well-preserved nose, defined as female. The classification of the last specimen is unclear, although it has been suggested that it should be defined as a cult head (Fig. 7.2)[37].

Finally, from the hamlet of la Seña (Villar del Arzobispo, València), there is a schematic figurine which has lost its arms and the lower part of its body (Fig. 7.1). However, it bears a black painted cap-like headdress, and two circular perforations resembling eyes; it also preserves traces of black pigment and traces of clothing, of which a V-neck tunic can be recognized represented with oblique traces on the chest and back[38]. Unfortunately, no description of the site has been published, but the figurine has been dated between the 2nd and the 3rd centuries BCE on the basis of its similarities with the other Edetan statuettes.

Fig. 7. 1. Figurines from La Seña. Measures: 4 cm wide x 7,80 cm high; 2. Fragment of a cut head of El Castellet (photographs by Jaime Vives-Ferrándiz Sánchez).

3.3. *The Kelin Territory*

The settlement of Kelin, also known as Los Villares (Caudete de las Fuentes, València) is located some 50 km west of the lands of the Edetani, in the Utiel-Requena district. This site has a long chronology between the beginning of the Iron Age (680 BCE) to Roman times (75 BCE). It became

[35] Guérin 2003, pp. 261-262.
[36] Bonet – Mata – Guérin 1990, p. 190.
[37] Bonet 1978.
[38] See https://mupreva.org/web_mupreva/catalogo/4980/es?q=es.

the capital of a large Iberian territory around the 4th century BCE and eventually minted its own coinage, which bore the name Kelin (2nd century BCE)[39]. There are very few anthropomorphic figurines: a fragment of a female face, and an articulated arm dated during the Roman period (2nd-3rd centuries CE) have been found[40]. A small fragment of a human foot dates from the late Iberian period[41]. Two notable terracotta figurines were recovered from a superficial level. Although they are fragmented, they are wheel-made and can be included under the type of wheel-made and schematic figurines recorded at La Serreta. One is missing its head, but the body presents two clay buttons imitating breasts and two coils on the chest, mimicking folded arms (Fig. 8.2a). The second is very similar with the hands also touching the breasts and also presents a face, looking slightly upwards (Fig. 8.1a, 8.1c)[42]. They have been defined as female in relation to possible domestic cults associated with fertility[43]. Another group of five figurines were recovered incidentally, without any stratigraphic information[44]. They are also schematic, and one of them is well preserved: it is wheel-made and very similar to the previous ones, so it can be hypothesized that they were all crafted in the same workshop. The most striking feature is the detailed painted decoration, presenting red pigments on the body imitating jewellery or garments, and in the lower part is a figurative scene interpreted as representing a wolf, two boats identified as *hippoi*, and two fishes[45]. There are also three heads defined as female and one schematic handmade figurine believed to represent a child[46]. All of them can be included among the schematic group in the La Serreta typology.

Fig. 8. Figurines from Kelin. Colección Museográfica Luis García de Fuentes, Caudete de las Fuentes (photographs by Jaime Vives-Ferrándiz Sánchez). Measures: 15,20 cm high (8.1); 7 cm high (8.2).

[39] Mata 2019.
[40] Mata 1991, p. 193, pl. XVIII.3 and fig. 95.13.
[41] Mata 1991, p. 178, fig. 93.4.
[42] Ribera 1980, pp. 91-92, pl. XXXVII.
[43] Quixal Santos 2015, p. 194.
[44] Martínez García 2010.
[45] Martínez García 2010, p. 40, fig. 10.
[46] Martínez García 2010, p. 41, fig. 11.2, 4-5.

4. Modelling Iberian Bodyworlds

This brief overview indicates that human-like terracottas were part and parcel of the ritual practices of these Iberian communities. Through the manipulation of clay, the Iberians obtained self-referential images that visually created their bodies, helping to understand and perceive them[47]. Bearing this insight in mind, I will now concentrate on two types of figurines, the schematic and the wheel-made specimens, which reflect how Iberian people emphasized ancient corporealities. Interestingly, since the early days of their study both types have been considered to have had an important Punic imprint or influence due to their birdlike features and exaggerated noses created by pinching the clay of the face[48].

The schematic figurines are handmade and solid and are recovered at all the above-mentioned sites. Because they were normally modelled with a piece of rolled clay, it is possible that they were not produced exclusively in artisans' workshops but may have been made by individuals during their ritual practices[49]. Consequently, they can be studied as objects that highlight individual agency and interpretations of the body. These figurines reinforce two body features that appear to have been particularly significant to the Iberian people: the eyes, and the female headdresses.

The eyes are emphasized by the addition of two clay buttons or by small perforations using a stick (see Figs. 2.c-d, 3.c or 8.1). Although this way of reproducing eyes might seem quite universal, it must be contextualized inside the visual repertoire of the Iberian artworks. Chronologically, the coroplastic pieces are contemporary with the vases painted with figurative scenes[50] where the Iberian elites are represented in communal rites, parades, daily tasks or even in highly symbolic scenes where humans or human-like and hybrid images appear, sometimes facing fantastic animals. In all of them, the heads of the figures are represented in profile, but one of the two eyes is depicted frontally, following the combination of perspectives typical of ancient Mediterranean art. Interestingly, the eyes are depicted with two strokes creating the characteristic almond shape and a central point, imitating irises. In addition, some of them also present eyelashes (Fig. 9.1). The stylized eyes painted on the pottery might have been a way to materialize the use of make-up so as to enhance the gaze, although no material traces of this practice have been recovered so far. Returning to the terracottas, on one specimen of La Serreta, the two eyes are accompanied by a coil beneath them (Fig. 9.2)[51]. In my view, this material feature is used as a way of highlighting the eyes on a clay support. Whether modelled on clay or painted on vessels, the eyes underline the role of the gaze and the sense of sight in the diversity of ritual practices. Interestingly, the exaggerated eyes transcend the gender divide because female and male eyes are presented in the same way.

[47] López-Bertran – Vives-Ferrándiz 2018.
[48] Aubet 1969; Juan i Moltó 1987-1988 for La Serreta; Mata 1991, p. 178 for Kelin.
[49] This is a topic of research that deserves further and more detailed explanation, but this would go beyond the scope of the present paper.
[50] Aranegui 1997b; Bonet – Vives-Ferrándiz 2017.
[51] Grau Mira – Amorós López – López-Bertran 2017, p. 100, fig. 4.45.

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Fig. 9. 1. Drawing of the painted scene of the so-called "Kalathos of the dance" from Tossal de Sant Miquel (drawing by Museu de Prehistòria de València); 2. Fragment of a schematic head from La Serreta. Museu Arqueològic Municipal d'Alcoi Camilo Visedo Moltó, Alcoi (photograph by Ignacio Grau Mira and Iván Amorós López); 3. Punic terracotta from Bithia, Sardinia (photograph by the author).

Some of the schematic figurines are decorated with veils or mitres following the patterns of the stone sculptures of earlier centuries and the figurines with realistic faces of La Serreta. These garments represent a key feature of the Iberian adult female image in all the areas where these groups lived[52]. In the area of this study, these specimens are recovered not only at La Serreta, but also at Tossal de Sant Miquel and Kelin. They are modelled from the same block of clay as the body, although the shape varies: some are elongated and others circular (see Figs. 2.c, 5.1c, 5.3).

As regards the wheel-made figurines, only a few are found in La Serreta and Kelin, and none at all at Tossal de Sant Miquel de Llíria. However, they are of great significance for several reasons. First, their manufacturing technique is highly unusual as the body is modelled upside down, like a closed vessel or jug. However, they are not closed at their base; therefore, although their shape is cylindrical, they cannot be labelled as bottle-shaped figurines. This point is worth noting if we compare them with a specific kind of Punic figurines, known as bottle-shaped figurines[53]. Indeed, some of the Punic specimens resemble jugs from the Punic ceramic repertoire, but the Iberian jugs

[52] Prados Torreira 2016, p. 991.
[53] López-Bertran 2016.

have no connection with the wheel-made figurines as their bodies are more globular than those of the statuettes[54]. As regards the head of the figurines, it is difficult to discern if they were made separately from the body and joined at a later stage, or altogether at the same time. Whatever the case, they are also made upside down on the wheel, which sometimes gives the faces an unnatural look, as they must have been crafted either on the neck as the case of Kelin, adding a piece of clay that makes the face triangular, or on the upper side of the neck, thus making the face look up, giving them a flat, snub appearance (see Figs. 2.d, 8.1c). Once the torso of the figurine had been modelled, other parts of the body were added using a range of techniques: incisions or clay buttons for the eyes and mouths and pinching for the noses. Hand-modelled coils of clay were also used to represent arms, and once again clay buttons to represent breasts (see Fig 8.2a). This is a trait that differs from the Punic specimens[55]; there, the arms are represented in unnatural poses resembling handles (Fig. 9.3), whereas the Iberian ones are more naturalistic. Equally, the Punic specimens present a greater diversity of gestures, but the hands of the Iberian figurines only touch the breasts or the belly.

A point to consider regarding the construction of Iberian bodyworlds is the presence of feet in the realistic figurines and in some of the wheel-made specimens of La Serreta. In fact, the realistic female pieces present a circular body clothed in a long skirt; thus, this shape allows the figurines to stand by themselves, without the addition of feet. In some cases, however, feet are added deliberately, by placing two small plates of clay at the end of the long-pleated skirts (see Fig 2.a). Thus, their addition may reflect the social value of feet in the rituals performed at the shrine[56]. This is certainly the case of the bronze votive figurines of Jaén, where bare feet have also been identified and taken to suggest the relevance of the devotees' direct contact with the sacred ground[57]. Coming back to the wheel-made figurines, it is worth mentioning how the artisans highlighted the feet by modelling a toe-like protuberance at the centre of the base of one specimen (see Fig. 2.b).

Another type that reflects to the Iberian body worlds comprises the images of cult heads, made by the Edetani[58], and the Contestani[59]. Although heads in clay are attested in Punic and Etruscan-Latial-Campanian sanctuaries, the Iberian ones present typical body ornamentation: for example, the Contestan samples (La Serreta) present different types of handmade headdresses that resemble diadems or tiaras, and are also decorated with solid necklace, called torques and kidney-shaped earrings (see Fig. 2.e). All three features have been identified in stone sculpture and jewelry. It has also been suggested that their heads were decorated with nose earrings because the nostrils are quite deep. Although it is not entirely clear if they are female or male because of their state of fragmentation, the ones with headdresses and earrings can be labelled as feminine.

[54] See Mata – Bonet 1992 for the shape of Iberian ceramics.
[55] See Ferron – Aubet 1974 or Garbati 2008 for the diversity of gestures.
[56] Grau Mira – Amorós López – López-Bertran 2017, p. 105.
[57] Rueda 2012.
[58] Bonet – Mata – Guérin 1990.
[59] Grau Mira – Amorós López – López-Bertran 2017, pp. 65-77.

As regards the Edetan heads (see Fig. 6), a gender division has been identified. The female heads bear pointed headdresses fastened behind the ears, while the male ones have helmets. In addition, some are painted with robes, as shown by the V-shaped necklines finished with two overlapping strips. The same patterns of decorations are identified in the painted figures on vessels. The two samples are defined as cult heads representing sacralized ancestors; their presence in shrines, both domestic and public, materializes the concern with the perpetuity of lineage, where men, but especially women, were essential.

5. The Concern with Maternity and Childcare

In this section I centre on the topics of motherhood and childrearing. As I have already stated, the female imagery in clay outnumbers the male and animal figurines, and the iconography of these figurines revolves around a particular stage of the female lifecycle: the age of fertility, linked to rites of procreation and the protection of gestation and delivery. I follow the proposal made by Rueda Galán, Rísquez Cuenca, Herranz Sánchez[60] that defines the religious dynamics of motherhood as a social process that encompasses cultural and biological changes (menarche, fertility, pregnancy, childbirth, maternity) with ritual actions (rites of passage, rites of propitiation, and rites of protection in relation to healing, breastfeeding and care) that leave material traces, such as some of these figurines.

Among the figurines with realistic faces, the schematic and wheel-made ones share the same gesture: they are touching their bellies and breast. More specifically, the ones with veils make the gesture of opening them to show these parts of the body to the divinities. This gesture is also documented in the bronze figurines from Jaén[61]. The fact that the statuettes are veiled and, in La Serreta, the preponderance of decoration with jewellery, earrings, necklaces, headbands and round pieces to cover the buns on both laterals of the hair indicate the importance of appropriate attire during the ritual performances. Interestingly, this image is related to a specific kind of woman, namely married women of high status. It has been argued that this high level of decoration represents the dowry of recently married young women[62]. Therefore, this type of figurine modelling female bodies at all the sites studied here show a consistent ideal: a frontal female figure, standing alone (groups of two or three adult females are found only at La Serreta and in very low numbers)[63].

There are hardly any representations of the next step in the female life cycle, pregnancy. Although with some minimal exceptions[64], the lack of pregnant women in Iberian imagery contrasts

[60] Rueda Galán – Rísquez Cuenca – Herránz Sánchez 2018, p. 107, fig. 8.1.
[61] Rueda 2012.
[62] Prados Torreira 2016, p. 992.
[63] Grau Mira – Amorós López – López-Bertran 2017, p. 97.
[64] See the stone statuettes of pregnant women from the Cordovan sanctuary of Torreparedones and other possible examples in Izquierdo Peraile 2004.

with the iconography of other cultures like that of the Phoenicians with the type of *dea tyria gravida* found mostly in the Levant from the 8th to the 4th century BCE[65]. The lack of pregnant figurines in Iberia has been tentatively attributed to the private nature of ritual practices revolving around this stage of life, which may have been carried out in households rather than in public or community places like sanctuaries. It has also been proposed that pregnant women might not have been allowed to attend sanctuaries or temples due to issues of pollution, or, alternatively, the aim may have been to protect them from the hustle and bustle of the shrines or to excuse them from having to make the journey[66].

In fact, the close links between pregnancy and birth and the household is clearly seen in the practice of burying stillborn babies and infants (sometimes along with animals) beneath the floors of houses[67]. This practice has been taken to represent as understanding of these creatures as votive or protective beings linked to the life cycle of houses. In addition, the votive heads located in two of the rooms of Puntal dels Llops have been defined as cult heads in domestic shrines[68]; it is quite likely that caring rites of pregnant women were reenacted, bearing in mind that these heads have been defined as ancestors watching over their family members.

Images of children are also scarce in this area of Iberia. Especially striking is the lack of *kourotrophos* imagery in terracotta[69]. Also exceptional is the engraved stone featuring a woman with a child from the Castellet de Bernabé[70]. A schematic figurine from Kelin has been identified as a child and a woman (the mother?) because the back of the figure presents a fragment of a hand with three fingers, which has been interpreted as a group of two figures: the child and the mother holding the child's waist[71].

La Serreta has yielded clear evidence related to the caring for children in clay figurines. The best example is the "mother goddess group". This type, named after a clay group found in a house in the settlement (see Fig. 3.a), comprises several figures of different sizes showing diverse gestures: seated in a central position, a female figure is breastfeeding two children on her lap, with two other women and infants next to her. A child is playing a double flute, which may indicate the significance of music in religious contexts. A dove[72] also accompanies the group, between one of the women and the central figure and it is highly possible that another bird was located on the other side[73].

Thanks to this plaque, a group of figurines from La Serreta has been identified as nursing children because they present the same mode of production: schematic, small, and slightly curved

[65] Bolognani 2023.
[66] Rueda Galán – Rísquez Cuenca – Herránz Sánchez 2018, pp. 112-113.
[67] Grau *et al.* 2015; López-Bertran 2018; Mata 2019.
[68] Bonet – Mata – Guérin 1990, pp. 191-192.
[69] An exception is the figurine of the tomb 127 A of La Albufereta, Alacant. See the photograph and a brief description here: http://www.marqalicante.com/Paginas/es/COLECCIONESIBEROS-P250-M3.html.
[70] Guérin 2003, p. 332, fig. 378.
[71] Martínez García 2010, p. 41, fig. 11.3.
[72] Doves are linked to the female world as mediators of rites of passage, from birth to death. In southeast Iberia, birds are mostly associated with tombs with female gender markers (Gualda Bernal 2015, p. 257) and doves are linked to the representation of women in terracotta and bronze votive offerings in sanctuaries (Rueda 2013).
[73] Grau – Olmos – Perea 2008.

(see Fig. 3.c)[74]. Although they are very simple, the corporeality of these images may have constructed the social understanding of these creatures because the lack of a physical trait such as hair or eyes allows us to define them as ungendered or not fully social beings. The curved shape of the terracottas indicates that they were probably sitting on the lap of some larger figure, or in some way in contact with it, as in the case of the plaque. This position might have denoted the importance of physical contact, not only in breastfeeding but also in soothing babies by singing lullabies and performing other caring practices. The representation of breastfeeding has led scholars to associate this object with *kourotrophoi* divinities and the paradigm of the Mother Goddess is the one that prevails at present[75], but I would like to stress the way that this group reflects the idea of community. Whether or not the central figurine of the plaque is a goddess, it would strengthen the notion that childrearing is not an isolated task, but a communal one in which adults, older children and other beings such as divinities help to care for young children and are responsible for their survival.

6. Concluding Remarks

Clay figurines became widespread across eastern Iberian from the late 3rd and the 2nd centuries BCE onwards, and they show a remarkably homogenous scenario of social types and body worlds. The Serreta collection of anthropomorphic figurines is the largest and the one that offers a model of types that can also be recognized at the other sites. This paper has briefly focused on the cult heads, the schematic, and the wheel-made figurines. I suggest that these types were made according to local patterns that created specific body worlds. Although the Mediterranean influence is clear in the wheel-made figurines, they are local objects that are inserted in the indigenous ways of constructing bodies in ritual contexts such as the ones mediated by the clay figurines. These objects were appropriated and represented two specific moments in the lifecycle of women and children: adult women seeking to become pregnant, and nursing babies. In addition, the cult heads may also be linked to the welfare of the community both at public shrines and in domestic contexts.

[74] Grau Mira – Amorós López – López-Bertran 2017, p. 96.
[75] Grau – Olmos – Perea 2008, pp. 18-20.

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ISBN (ed. stampa / print ed.) 978 88 8080 688 2
ISBN (ed. elettronica / electronic ed.) 978 88 8080 689 9